are u https because without u i'm just ://

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are u https because without u i'm just ://

by orphan_account

Summary

"So *I'm* the asshole here?" Suguru finally asks incredulously, doggedly attempting to lean even further backward as Gojo increasingly attempts to invade what limited personal space he still has. *Do not try to make any further remarks that would compromise your relationship with a coworker. Do not fucking do it. It is your second day on the job. This is a coworker. Don't fucking do it.* "Pardon me, but maybe you should check a mirror every once in a while."

"Frosted bears! Frosting!" the voice booms once more from the other end of the room. He might be hearing quiet snickering, but when he looks over, Shoko's got as much of a bored face as she did when she first appeared with Gojo.

"You're kinda funny!" Gojo laughs. It's full and bright, but Suguru has to flinch to avoid any spittle as Gojo screeches and it kind of ruins the effect. "Shoko, this guy's kinda entertaining. Which is exactly why it's so bad that we're gonna have to be enemies."

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Chapter 1

“And so the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities is proposing a framework that attempts to reflect the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. As an example of ties between plant and human health, we see that aflatoxin—noted there in the biological domain of influence intersecting with the communal level of influence on screen—created by common fungi may have a causative role in hepatocellular carcinoma. This form of liver cancer disproportionately affects Latinos—why?”

Suguru clicks his pointer, and a slide changes up on the projector screen.

“Aflatoxin commonly affects maize crops, which is considered to be a primary Latin American dietary staple. Increasingly, climate change has been affecting temperature and increasing the risk of drought, which both increase aflatoxin levels in crops. This in turn exacerbates hepatocellular carcinoma disparities among populations relying on those crops. This is just one example of many, and there are many, many other determinants that are either willfully ignored or not even considered for study, as more attention is given to certain groups based on socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, and other categories.”

Someone coughs discreetly, but it’s obvious that they’re doing their absolute best to refrain from disturbing Suguru’s momentum—not that a simple cough could disturb him. Everyone’s extremely attentive today—rapt, even.

Except for one particular individual in the back.

“In the wake of COVID-19, we’ve seen a disproportionate impact on certain minority populations, along with those with low economic resources, and accordingly, modern-day discussions are starting to be re-centered concerning these disparities. We want to be able to recognize these links exist and incorporate our knowledge and understanding of them into our exploration of social systems and structural racism so that we can understand and model both health outcomes and subsequent health disparities.”

There’s a scoffing noise from the person in the back, increasingly growing louder and punctuated by scornful, lazily muffled laughter. Suguru continues on.

“Certain groups are proposing adding new levels to the NIMHD framework to open new avenues of inquiry and encourage multidisciplinary collaborations. Other proposals include adding a One Health approach. Some argue the expanded framework will be too extensive and will not be relevant or applicable for fields and topics, and that the medical community will nonetheless try to impose the framework upon those fields. But we do not intend for these factors to be so exhaustive.”

The same old person clicks their tongue, apparently skeptical.

“The framework is meant to be illustrative of relationships and interactions and not to assume casual relationships or to replace systems exploring complex social and structural systems

creating health disparities. No—we simply want to account for factors and from then on separately explore relationships through data analysis while continuing to check our understanding through the framework and hopefully be able to realize any correlations and relations we might have otherwise missed by overly relying on what a data analysis software tells us."

Suguru's interruptor finally breaks out into premature applause and loud, mean laughter that echoes deeply in the expansive lecture hall. He frowns, putting a hand on his hip and glaring at a man in the very back of the hall, up high next to the exit door.

Mystery man stands up—and though he's far away, Suguru can clearly make out his shock of white hair, a light blue dress shirt that doesn't really fit him all that well, sunglasses, and a contemptuous smirk.

"Well said! Well said," the enigmatic stranger booms loudly. "You're well-articulated, eloquent, pretty concise when you need to be, charismatic, your words flow smoothly and you project well, and you present your research in a manner that's detailed and yet doesn't seem esoteric. Marvelous."

Suguru blinks lightly, not expecting the sudden praise. "Thank you, but I'm afraid that my lecture has not yet—"

"So charismatic, that indeed, you must have been a cult leader in a previous life, or perhaps you are in this one and you still haven't hit a breaking point yet." The guy smiles lightly, as Suguru bristles, taken aback entirely.

"But really, there is *so* much wrong with the NIMHD framework—and where exactly do I see you addressing that? Hmm?" He doesn't wait for Suguru to respond. "Exactly. So firstly, there's the idea that the framework overemphasizes categorization, which can further stratify groups and oversimplify complex issues or reinforce stereotypes. Other factors may be ignored as a consequence or there may be attempts to inappropriately find a relationship that doesn't exist between this and that—the need to check every box if you get what I mean. There's also the criticism of the excessive focus on individual groups meaning that unity and a comprehensive outlook are ignored in addressing disparities."

Suguru's eyes narrow. Admittedly, this guy knows what he's talking about, and Suguru is always for acknowledging and expanding on counterarguments.

"If you heard what I was just discussing, then you'd know I acknowledged that the framework is only intended for so much and so most of these possible issues with the framework would arise from professionals inappropriately trying to—"

The guy shakes his head. Tut tut tut. Then he shrugs balefully at Suguru and smiles as if saying *but what can we do about it?* in a cutesy, innocent manner that makes Suguru's blood boil. Who the fuck is this guy.

"Aiya, but think about it—people! Pretty much every single person here seeks to build their reputation and an opportunity to make *the* discovery of the medical world. I'm sorry but you and you and you and *you* are all power-hungry bastards. Sorry kids! It's true. Do you *really*

think some person behind this won't try to push this so hard it dies? Or rather, it'll change into something else we really, really wouldn't like. Expanding on that, let's consider bureaucratic hurdles and resource allocation. Geto-sensei, you seem to be the kind of guy who's already aware of issues like the Optum healthcare algorithm and the issues with GWAS in 2009."

Of course Suguru is aware. Biased focus on Europeans, to the disadvantage of every other group ever. Asian genomics studies helped a bit, but only for Asian populations. Basic stuff people learn about in any old intro to bioethics course. Nothing else has changed much, because of course, no one is really putting in the effort to revolutionize things.

"The higher-ups still defer to traditional methods—do you really think they'll want to do something as radical as implementing a framework like this? They'd rather take the parts of the framework they like and implement resources accordingly, which means even more division and intergroup tensions! Yay! Three cheers for inequality!"

No one cheers except for the stranger, who pumps his fist in the air thrice as he hollers out something incoherent, though it can't be anything good based on how the students around him are moving about in their seats.

"You're being unrealistic," Suguru thunders. The guy is still standing there, smirking, hands in his shallow pant pockets. He looks incredibly stupid, and yet incredibly confident—even though he's hunching in on himself—and absolutely no one is laughing at him. Actually, the audience is completely still, all of them focused on Suguru and the stranger.

"Am I now? Pray tell, how so?" He snickers. "Geto-sensei, my ears are open."

"As I was *saying,"* Suguru says pleasantly, face frozen in a polite smile, "the framework isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. There are numerous variations and tailoring strategies to meet specific needs at different levels. This isn't something for the government to muddle over when it's inherently streamlined and can be implemented on local levels. It—"

"That's absolutely fabulous and all, but then how will it get the attention it needs to affect ignored and marginalized groups the way you want it to?"

"I—"

"Bah. Don't bother answering. I've heard enough. Remember to attend Gojo Satoru-sensei's lecture on the Borel determinacy theorem. We'll be playing games, nothing as boring as lectures like this! The winner gets an internship with me, but the game is infinite and of perfect information—also, don't think any of you can ever win against me. Three o'clock tomorrow, Fujiwara Hall. Toodaloo, everyone!"

The man makes three-fingered peace signs with both hands, twirls before everyone, and then exits with a loud bang of the doors, laughing obscenely all the way. Everyone remains silent, eyes fixed on the slowly disappearing light emitted by the open doors before they finally close with an ominous click—and then they all simultaneously turn toward Suguru.

“That’s…that was…” Suguru sighs, looking down and unclenching his hand from the speaker’s podium. He doesn’t feel embarrassed, just full of rage. Just the tiniest bit. Once he catches that fucker he’ll feel better. There are slight indents carved out in the wood. “Does anyone know what a teacher focusing on set theory was doing here?”

Silence.

One brave student tentatively raises a hand. “Geto-sensei, uh, everyone knows that Gojo-sensei likes to wander into random lectures and give—uh—feedback? He’s an expert in everything, so no one can exactly tell him off when he’s clearly adding to the conversation.”

“You call *that* adding to the conversation?”

No one says a word.

Suguru sighs tiredly, rubbing at the bridge of his nose. “Pardon me, but I’m afraid that we’re out of time now. I’ll send out the lecture notes and the presentation, but do we have any questions now?”

No one responds.

“Some audiences are just so *unruly, I hope you don’t have to spend five minutes trying to control everyone, Geto-san!”*

The madding crowd, mine to control without an ounce of my own effort, Suguru thinks somewhat hysterically before starting to fume, teeth clenched as he thinks about how badly his lecture was disturbed. None of the students here are ever going to be able to attend another one of his lectures without remembering how this Gojo had barged in, commandeered the room, and made his glorious exit.

Gojo better watch his fucking back.

“Alright then. Enjoy the rest of your day, everyone. You’re dismissed now.”

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It’s a beautiful day when Suguru gets offered a teaching position at Jujutsu University, and he has a nice, cozy dinner with his daughters to celebrate and actually has a breeze of a time moving in. His deposit on the new apartment went through smoothly, there’s nothing that seems like it has to be replaced, the faculty sent him an email saying they have forty-five thousand in AWS credits. Life is good.

Everything goes extraordinarily well, from the first networking event he attends actually being somewhat tolerable to a decent number of students introducing themselves to him with actual interest and understanding of his work.

“I’m starting my new job tomorrow. I’m honestly pretty excited about it.” Suguru grins down at his twins, grinning happily as he ruffles their hair before he turns back to his call with Haibara. “The apartment is right next to the university too—a twelve-minute walk—so it’s pretty convenient for me and the girls.”

“Pretty excited? You make it sound like you haven’t been trying to get this kind of break for years! I know how hard you’ve worked for this, but we’ll miss you here. We’ll try to see if we can participate in your guys’ research symposium though!”

“That sounds so cool, tousan,” Nanako whispers, practically dancing around his chair as she pulls at his sleeve. She pauses. “Wait, what’s your new job?”

Figures she forgot the details already, given that they’re only six years old. “I’m head of research for the medical anthropology department at the university right next to us.”

“Ant—anto—”

“An-thro-pology. Basically, I’m like a special detective. I get to talk to different people about stuff like what they eat, where they go, what sort of things they do, where they live, and that helps me figure out how to make sure they can stay healthy.”

Nanako and Mimiko gape at him, stars in their eyes.

It took a long while to get here. Started off in humanities in his undergraduate years, had an intensely wayward period ending with his switching to the medical program, switched out again to focus in medical anthropology, nearly rage quit thrice as he toiled through his thesis. Adopted his daughters somewhere along the way. Struggled even harder with his master’s at some shitty university he doesn’t even want to think about with shitty coworkers and shitty supervisors. Except for Haibara, but everyone loves Haibara.

Once he collaborated with the public health department there for a certain facet of his research only for some moron from zoology to ruin everything, “accidentally” unleashing a cage of monkeys into their lab and effectively ruining all their precious samples.

“We were developing nephrotoxic drugs. Nephro-fucking-toxic,” he had raged into his phone while Haibara and very unhelpfully tried to convey his condolences through muffled laughter. *“Those fucking monkeys ATE our tissue samples. Zoology shouldn’t even be letting animals anywhere but the zoology department. Where the fuck was IACUC? They contaminated everything….do you know how hard it is to get rid of that much ceftriaxone?”*

“Aww, but Geto-san, were the monkeys okay after that?”

“This is exactly *why I kept arguing for developing backup models in silico,”* he raged on. *“But then those stupid asses from zoology tried to defend the department LIKE IT WASN’T THEIR FUCKING FAULTS MONKEYS WERE GETTING INTO OUR LAB AND GNAWING AT THE TOMCAT—”*

And now he’s here with the job of his dreams, secure funding, a fresh new turnover for his work, and everything he could ever want. High-speed computers, access to all the databases ever. No need to sneak over to the med school buildings for access to Taylor & Francis like he wasn’t a real medical professional. He’ll kind of miss those days—the good old times when his biggest worry was making sure he didn’t trigger the password lockdown.

“Why do we have to go to the doctor if you’re a doctor?” Mimiko asks. Suguru affectionately pinches her cheek.

“I’m not a doctor like that. I’m a teacher who knows a lot about medical stuff. Tomorrow I’m going to be teaching people about something I researched a while back. Doesn’t that sound cool?”

“Super cool,” Mimiko says as he pulls both of the girls up into his lap.

“Sounds like everything’s going great,” Haibara says warmly. “It really sounds like you’ve got everything working out for you now, Geto-san.”

“Thanks, Haibara.” He smiles, tapping the beat of some song he heard on the radio against his phone screen. “I think it’ll be great. I met some people already, and everyone seems pretty nice, so I won’t have to deal with a bunch of assholes like before.”

“I won’t tell anyone here you said that.”

He laughs, smiling down at his girls. “I knew I could trust you, but I really don’t care if anyone there gets mad at me now..”

There’s a humming noise from Haibara’s end—probably the wonky air conditioning Suguru and the girls became so familiar with when they stayed at Haibara’s place. And suddenly, Suguru truly feels like he misses living there, caught up in all the rush and excitement and early thrill of his academic career—but then he recalls how exhausting everything was and how glad he is to be here now.

“I have a feeling that everything is going to be great. I just know it.”

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“I HATE THIS PLACE,” Suguru roars into his phone, viciously throwing it down onto his desk as he wrenches his jacket off. The inner sleeves snag against his cuff buttons, because of course they fucking do.

“Good afternoon, Geto-san,” Haibara chirps as Suguru finally gets his jacket off and throws it onto his chair. It makes an unsatisfyingly muted thwapping noise. “You’re sounding quite amped up today.”

“Yesterday I had my first lecture, and it was going splendidly until SOME ABSOLUTE *SHITHEAD* OF A PERSON came and interrupted me. This absolute bastard of a teacher—Gojo Satoru is his name, apparently, I don’t really care to know—who isn’t even involved in medical anthro. Can you imagine how supercilious you have to be to talk like you know better than the *actual* expert in the field?”

“Ah, but Geto-san, if he really made such a fool of himself then I’m sure that no one in the audience—”

“That’s the thing,” Suguru says moodily as he rips open a cardboard box, hauling out a set of textbooks. “He knew his shit pretty well. Everything he said was worthy of discussion.”

There's a long pause from Haibara as Suguru silently arranges his books on his shelves, unhappily contemplates the arrangement, takes them all out again, and then rearranges them.

"Geto-san, don't you like it when you have someone who can keep up with you and help stimulate growth in whatever topic you're discussing? I've heard of Gojo Satoru, actually. He's quite the genius inside and outside of his field. You haven't heard of him?"

"I do appreciate that sort of person and I'm extremely happy I have lived so long without knowing that guy exists," he hisses as he opens up another box and sighs at the sight of more textbooks. More rearrangement, so it seems. "Just not like when they act like a contemptuous, prideful, swaggering, sanctimonious—"

His head whips around as a person at the door clears their throat loudly—and there he is. Gojo Satoru. In the flesh himself. He looks kind of really unfairly attractive up close like this, but Suguru isn't going to dwell on that. There's a bored-looking woman at his side holding a beaker of hot pink something and wearing no protective gear other than a lab coat that looks more fashionable than anything else and a pair of goggles that are currently sitting on top of her head.

"Can I help you two? Do you happen to be needing PPE? Because I don't have any on me, unfortunately. Lab work isn't really something I do a lot of here," Suguru says sweetly through gritted teeth. He slowly, deliberately, loudly opens another box. There's a lamp and a set of teacups he triple-wrapped in old newspaper.

"Nah, I don't really think you can! And she doesn't really need any protective gear, isn't that right?" Gojo grins as he invites himself into his office, looking around at his limited decor and making an uncalled-for noise of dislike before seating himself on a cardboard box, even though Suguru has already reconstructed his office chair. The box is labeled "FRAGILE" on all six sides.

The woman simply shrugs, leaning against the doorway as she somehow manages to extract, light, and start smoking a cigarette with one hand. Her beaker is completely uncovered and Suguru eyes the smoke warily.

"Then if you two are simply here for introductions, I'm afraid I'll have to postpone things as I need to finish unpacking quickly and get home soon. You know how it is."

"Nah nah, a bit more than introductions. I'm sure you have the time to spare!" Gojo grins up at him, lifting up his sunglasses to reveal admittedly beautiful and still somewhat horrifyingly blue eyes. Special genes? "You're the new head of research for…what was it called again? Started with a vowel didn't it…aha! I've got it!"

Gojo makes finger guns at him and sends him a dashingly brash smile. "Etiology!"

"It's anthropology," Suguru corrects ruthlessly, newspaper tearing apart under the force of his hands. His knuckles are white. *Don't fucking deck him. He'll fall over and crash against the armchair and kick everywhere at the box and break the mugs Nanako and Mimiko so lovingly painted for you in class.* "Medical anthropology, mind you."

“Ohoho, so specific now, aren’t we? An elitist anthropologist, I see.” Gojo smirks and then not so unintentionally kicks his foot out, heel slamming into the edge of his desk. The whole thing shakes, a teacup wobbles ominously, and then the teacup falls to the ground and breaks into tiny little pieces with a shimmery sort of tinkling noise. Almost as if it’s a reflex, Gojo giggles. His giggles have an equally shimmery aura to them.

Everyone stares down at the mess of fine porcelain glimmering against the carpet as Gojo shuts himself up.

“Satoru, apologize to the man before he combusts. There’s a vein about to pop in his neck, and it’d be very unpleasant if it bursts,” the woman sighs as she taps her cigarette, ash floating down onto the carpet. Suguru’s eyes follow the way the ash settles into the carpet. That’ll be difficult to vacuum out—much more difficult than picking up stray pieces of a broken teacup.

“Whoops, my bad,” Gojo says lamely, unapologetic. He bites at an over-glossed lip and innocently holds out his hands, uninterestedly examining well-manicured nails as if they’re more interesting than the teacup he just fucking broke.

“Satoru,” the woman repeats, a bit more sternly but without much-added effort. Her eyes are closed, and she yawns a bit before puffing at her cigarette again.

“What!” Gojo whines, throwing his arms up into the air. “It wasn’t like I meant it or anything. And that thing was ugly as hell! How much could it have cost? I bet he got it from the dollar market or something.”

Suguru’s eyebrow twitches. He isn’t going to take shit from this guy who has made such a deeply negative impression on him. “It was a gift a friend brought back from a special exhibit in London. Very expensive. Now, are you two here to play fun and continue being nuisances or will I have to force you out of the room?”

“What am *I* doing?” Shoko mutters, knocking her head back against the wall as she exhales smoky rings in the air. Now this is impressive.

“Hey, there’s no need for violence, let’s not get so hot-tempered,” Gojo says as he stands up in an extremely peculiar manner—feet on the ground first with his body practically level to the ground before the rest of him rises up—and then swaggering over to Suguru with an alarmingly fast speedwalk.

The fashion department would love him, Suguru thinks dimly as he warily steps backward—but then he hits a wall and now Gojo is right splat in front of him, blinking his dreamy, or perhaps nightmarish, eyes as Suguru tries to become one with the wall.

Suguru desperately tries to look over at Gojo’s friend, who merely raises an eyebrow at him and takes out her phone. *Candy Crush* sound effects start blaring loudly. She murmurs something and then hits a button. The sound effects grow louder.

“Hey, you know what? You’re pretty attractive. You’re a bit of an asshole though, so that ruins things a bit.”

Gojo seems to be trying to make his voice all sultry and makes a poor attempt at waggling his eyebrows. He not so subtly raises a hand up to the wall like he's encasing Suguru, and at this moment, Suguru has never quite felt like he has disliked anyone as much as he does this man right here, right now.

Is this hatred? he muses philosophically.

"Tasty!" a deep, sonorous voice echoes from Shoko's phone.

"So *I'm* the asshole here?" Suguru finally asks incredulously, doggedly attempting to lean even further backward as Gojo increasingly attempts to invade what limited personal space he still has. *Do not try to make any further remarks that would compromise your relationship with a coworker. Do not fucking do it. It is your second day on the job. This is a coworker. Don't fucking do it.* "Pardon me, but maybe you should check a mirror every once in a while."

"Frosted bears! Frosting!" the voice booms once more from the other end of the room. He might be hearing quiet snickering, but when he looks over, Shoko's got as much of a bored face as she did when she first appeared with Gojo.

"You're kinda funny!" Gojo laughs. It's full and bright, but Suguru has to flinch to avoid any spittle as Gojo screeches and it kind of ruins the effect. "Shoko, this guy's kinda entertaining. Which is exactly why it's so bad that we're gonna have to be enemies."

"Juicy."

"Yeah, entertaining. You poor things, doomed to be enemies," Shoko says dully, at this point fully in the office and observing a picture Suguru put on the wall of him and the girls. She smiles and then seems to say something to herself along the lines of 'I'll never have kids, ever' before looking back down at her screen and making another swipe.

"Enemies?" Suguru echoes, narrowing his eyes. Gojo annoyingly mimics him, eyes fluttering as long, thick lashes brush against his cheeks. "What is this all about?"

"Bubble, bubble bears," rich and velvety, with a hint of mournfulness.

"Ah—you know, you know. Funding."

"Funding?"

"Is there an echo in this room?" Gojo muses, exaggeratedly looking around the room as he rubs at his chin. He makes a face as he cups a hand around his ears and turns in a tight little circle. Suguru wants to box his ears in. "I could have sworn I heard something."

"You—"

"Me!" Gojo croons sweetly, suddenly back to leaning in toward Suguru with a foolish, saccharine grin splayed out on his face, his hands clasped together and held to his chest. "See now, I hear that much of what you'll be doing involves computation work. Medical anthropology…global health the other day…a lot of data analysis going on then. But you

must understand, I'm actually doing the computations that matter, thank you very much. You guys are kind of doing computer stuff as an added-on thing, but we're really the ones who can produce the best software. The compsci department is just better at compsci, sorry not sorry."

"Excuse me?" This time Suguru retaliates by slamming a hand against the nearby desk, taking advantage of Gojo startling to push his face away, and then squirming off to the side where Gojo can't trap him again. "What is *that* supposed to mean?"

"Ooh, honey!"

"Oh, you know. This and that," Gojo says mockingly. "Anywho, they're drawing funding away from *my* department to fund yours—and that's really *so* unacceptable. It's absurd! So yeah, I kinda have to hate you just a teensy, weensy bit for that now. Thanks a lot! I look forward to making sure I continuously prove that I'm better than you, Rookie Prof, and secure my funding. Make sure to make it at least a little bit fun, Suguru."

Gojo gives him a military salute before prancing out of the room—not before banging his shin against a pot and letting out a stream of curses though. Suguru watches him go, feeling what must be an extraordinarily ugly face contorting his features before turning to Shoko—who's seated herself on the chair at this point.

"What was all that?"

Shoko shrugs blasély, taking a long draw of her cigarette. *"Sugar crush!"* her phone trills one last time before she turns it off.

"Don't mind him, he's just being a bit of a bastard. A bit of a rat. A bit of a brat."

"Just a bit?" Suguru disbelievingly looks down at the still uncollected shards of glass and Shoko's cigarette. "And could you *really* stop smoking in here? Smoking isn't even allowed in this entire building."

"Is it not? Shame, that. And Satoru can be worse, much worse." Because she apparently is somewhat nicer of a person, Shoko complies and puts out her cigarette, but because she's the kind of person who hangs out with Gojo Satoru, she snubs it against a printed coaster his mother bought for him and effectively ruins the design. Admittedly, it's a fairly ugly design Suguru only entertained because it was his mother who gave it to him. An unwitting favor then, though Shoko offers him a light, secretive grin like she could tell that he didn't like the coaster.

"Satoru's just throwing a temper tantrum because of the funding issues. He's working on Turing machines, you know."

"Turing machines? Those impossible things?" Suguru stares at her incredulously. "Is he crazy or what?"

"To a certain extent, yeah." Shoko stands up and dusts off her coat walking straight through the broken teacup mess. Her heels crunch against the shards and break them further. "He's

working on Turing completeness and all that theoretical compsci stuff so he gets all over the place whenever some new computer person arrives on campus. Don't take it too personally—the higher-ups just really dislike him, but they can't get rid of him. He's got tenure."

"'Don't take it personally?' How am I supposed to do *that?"* Suguru's voice is steadily rising, and he can feel hot, vicious anger boiling in his chest.

"I dunno. Not my problem." Shoko shrugs apathetically. "Don't try to run into him or anything. It's what all of us try to do. Good luck with dealing with Satoru if you see him again though—you'll need it."

Suguru frowns deeply. "Thanks, I think."

"Don't thank me." Shoko pauses at the doorway and glances back. "I'll send someone to clean up the glass or something."

"Yeah, okay. Thanks, Shoko-san."

"Ieri Shoko, but just call me Shoko. Drop the honorific already."

Shoko leaves, the door clicking coldly behind her and Suguru sighs, suddenly exhausted as he sits himself down heavily on a cardboard box and rubs at his eyes. There's a crunching noise from under him, and he looks down to see it's the same box Gojo was sitting on.

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"Welcome to our Jujutsu University's third-ever bioethics speech and debate team. We'll have a full general meeting next week and get the ball rolling." Suguru tries to inject as much enthusiasm as he can manage, except having Gojo next to him is truly disheartening. A full month of successfully avoiding meeting Gojo again gone to waste.

"Yes yes, welcome to our newcomers and of course, also to Geto-sensei who is now the second coach for the team!" Gojo smiles smugly, somewhat akin to a cat who just threw up milk on your bed before hacking up five consecutive hairballs right in front of you, still on your bed.

"AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR INTRODUCTIONS!" Gojo screams, suddenly in front of the whiteboard and spreading his arms out gaily so as to encompass their extensive audience of three.

"Gojo," Suguru says sternly, "you can't just start off like that. We have to introduce the different aspects of speech and debate and tell them what—"

"Suguru," Gojo says all too pleasantly, and Suguru can feel an all-encompassing dread creeping up his spine. "Who's the long-time coach here? You or me? Hmm?"

Suguru huffs a disdainful breath, crossing his arms as he glares at Gojo. "The university's team is literally three years old. You only have two years on me."

“And? Suguru, why do you have to say it like that? You’ve got to mind your tone! That’s two whole years! Let Gojo-sensei handle eve—”

“You’re *not* the only coach so don’t act like we have different roles and responsibilities,” Suguru snaps, slamming a hand against the whiteboard. One of the students squeaks and squirms in place on the couch, but Suguru ignores the commotion in favor of focusing on Gojo.

“But of course we do.” Gojo blinks at him like he thinks Suguru is a stupid little thing, which he possibly might actually think. “I mean, isn’t it so much more effective for us to divvy up the tasks between us? I think it’d be quite ineffective for us to have to parrot everything the other says and do the same exact tasks when the other’s already finished with it and—”

“You know that’s not what I meant.” Suguru’s never been so infuriated by someone. They said raising children could do wretched, horrible things to your nerves. That raising children would make you realize just how mean you could get. Either Gojo is a manchild, or he’s on a different level entirely. Both sound equally bad.

“Stop fu—” Suguru clicks his mouth shut, pursing his lips tightly.

“Ooh?” Gojo very pointedly smirks at him, pointing at Suguru’s mouth before raising an eyebrow. “What were you about to say? Geto-sensei. Please finish what you were about to say. Careful now, one wrong word and I’ll have to report you and then we’ll get all the funding for sure. One month is pretty pitiful of you, Suguru.”

“FREAK you and everything that—”

“Um, excuse me, but are we going to do introductions now?” They both turn around, leveling their intense gazes at the student who kept fidgeting around earlier, who now shyly and yet bravely grins at them even if he and Gojo are both acting like tyrants.

Fuck Gojo for making him leave a bad impression on his students.

“Okay, okay. We’re not going to argue about this any longer. Not in front of the students.” Suguru sighs heavily, resolutely turning away from Gojo and instead focusing on the kids. The one from before flinches again, another glares at him, and the one in the middle stares right back at him with the flattest expression he’s ever seen on someone.

“Alright!” he says loudly, trying to inject some cheer into his voice. The students don’t look any happier for it, but they don’t look any worse. “So, let’s get started with introductions and get to know each other a bit. Name, class, major, and why you wanted to be part of Jujutsu University’s first bioethics debate team. Who’d like to go first?”

“Oh, I can go first!” the fidgety one shouts. At least this seems to indicate that he’s excitable and not an anxious, sweaty rat of a student. Suguru finds him kind of endearing; he’s a good kid.

“My name is Itadori Yuuji! I’m a freshman…uh…so I’m in the class of 2028.” The other boy raises an incredulous eyebrow at the long pause Itadori has to take to figure out his class.

“I’m in kinesiology, but I might go into nursing later. Nursing is really cool! As for why I want to join this team—well—hmm.”

Itadori thumbs at his chin, a look of truly intense concentration coming over his face. “I thought it’d be fun? Uh, my grandpa also died during my first year of high school and there were a lot of issues with his healthcare. Like, a *lot* of issues. It made me pretty frustrated at the time—everything’s cool now though—so I figured that being able to explore what’s wrong in the medical field through debate would be nice. Yeah, that’s all I got.”

To everyone’s credit, they all clap politely when Itadori finishes talking. Even Gojo, though Suguru can distinguish that he’s clapping to the beat of a sped-up version of some extremely annoying pop song currently trending on social media.

“Itadori-kun, that’s great to hear. I’m sorry for your loss, but I’m glad that you’re here with us now and feel so motivated to learn about medical ethics.” Itadori grins at Suguru as he talks. It seems like things are finally, *finally* starting to go well. Somewhat, at least. But it’s a start. “Which one of you wants to go next?”

The girl looks askance at the moody-looking boy next to her, scoffs when he doesn’t say anything, and then turns back towards him and Gojo. She looks extremely determined at the very least.

“Kugisaki Nobara, class of 2028. Itadori didn’t mention it, and Fushiguro certainly isn’t going to say it, but we’re all roommates.”

“I’ve heard of her already, even this early into the year,” Gojo mutters slyly, leaning into Suguru to whisper to them as if they’re old comrades, which they’re decidedly not. Suguru scoots away from Gojo, but Gojo scoots along with him. “She’s always tinkering with some project or the other so she quickly gained a reputation at the nearby home repair shop for clearing out the nail supply every time she drops by. They have to order extra for her.”

“Do I look like I asked you to say anything?”

“I’m in biomedical engineering,” Kugisaki booms louder, redirecting both of their attentions. “I’m going to focus on how the body senses and responds to physical stimuli at a molecular level. I don’t like liars, so I’ll be honest and say that I joined this team because it’d look good on my grad school applications, I want to wear a nice suit while I yell at people, and I want to impress a hot girl.”

She leans back into her seat, a confident smirk on her face. She’s clearly done dealing with the rest of them for the rest of their meeting.

Emo kid doesn’t react, but Itadori gapes at her with an impressive mixture of respect and shock.

Admittedly, Suguru doesn’t really know how to react to this either.

“Er—Kugisaki-san, I do hope you are able to impress your crush? However—”

“GO GET HER, NOBARA!” Gojo thunders, clapping so enthusiastically Suguru worries he’ll numb both of his hands or end up breaking one of his wrists with how hard they bend back. “I ABSOLUTELY ENCOURAGE YOUR ATTEMPTS TO WOO A MEMBER OF THE SAME SEX.”

He turns towards Suguru, curling his lip as his sunglasses shift down slightly.

“Suguru, you must also resist the urge to woo me. I like men too, but you look like the kind of guy who only has tragic relationships and I don’t have the time for that. I know I’m incredibly attractive, but you must resist my damningly good looks.”

Unfortunately, Suguru can’t exactly refute that Gojo is indeed very attractive. “I really—”

“And lastly, Fushiguro Megumi-chan!” Gojo trills, smirking over at their last student who throws Gojo an absolutely withering look of displeasure. Suguru isn’t the greatest fan of students who are quiet because they don’t give enough fucks to contribute to the classroom, but maybe Fushiguro has a good reason not to if he and Gojo are already acquainted.

“Don’t call me that,” Fushiguro spits out before straightening his posture. He looks well put together, at the very least. Though his hair implies that he might have rolled out of bed without even trying to look decent. Then again, he is a college student.

“That guy already yelled out my name for everyone to hear, so I’m not repeating it. I’m also in the class of 2028, and I’m a veterinary science major. I’m aware that most of the topics we’ll be discussing here won’t have to do with animals, but I’m familiar enough with the human health system and current events related to the medical world. Frankly, I don’t really care about saving lives, much less human ethics, so that’s why I’m not actually studying human medicine. I’m here because debating is a good skill I think I need to learn, and I also like learning new things.”

Fushiguro is clear and somewhat concise if it wasn’t for the fact that he’s adding unsolicited, but nonetheless insightful, information about himself. He’s clearly the most respectful and level-headed of the bunch, but something about him makes Suguru feel like he’ll be the worst to deal with.

“So, let me get this straight real quick.” Suguru pointedly directs his attention toward Fushiguro, ignoring the way Gojo snickers behind him. “You don’t actually care about bioethics? At all?”

Fushiguro shrugs impassively. “I mean, people should act righteously but I don’t really have any opinions one way or the other. It’s interesting to learn about though. And of course, there’s some intersectionality between animal ethics and your usual kind of ethics. Experimentation and all that.”

“Fushiguro-kun, I don’t want it to sound like I don’t want you to be part of the team—and Kugisaki-san, you should listen as well—but ethics is a serious business despite what glamour the idea of a debate team and competitions lends to it. Having a serious drive or passion for ethics and saving lives is what makes people actually enjoy being here, not to mention actually being highly proficient debaters.”

“I think they’ve got pretty cool reasons!” Itadori says brightly. His favorite word seems to be “cool.” No one responds to him, Fushiguro and Kugisaki being caught in a three-way deadlock with Suguru and Gojo amusedly watching everything from the sidelines. Itadori wilts slightly, and Suguru feels incredibly bad for him for being stuck with all three of them.

“It doesn’t have to be that deep,” Kugisaki scoffs. “I also like winning a lot, yeah? I’ll be *the* most passionate speaker here if I need to be to make sure we win. I hear we get cool trophies and a plaque if we win. You don’t have to worry about me—talk to Sea Urchin over there.”

Fushiguro throws her a withering glare. It seems to be a favorite reaction of his. “What the fuck, Kugisaki?”

“Suguru-chan,” Gojo says grimly, clapping him on the shoulder. “I’m going to have to blame you for Megumi’s newfound acquisition of foul language. For shame, Suguru. Corrupting the youth already.”

“Why you—” Suguru simmers, hands clenched as Gojo attempts to extend his hand out and sling an all-too-comfortable arm around Suguru’s shoulder.”

“Why are you acting so offended?” Kugisaki asks. They’re all completely ignoring him and Gojo at this point, which sadly seems to be a good thing given the current situation. “You’ve got hair like a sea urchin. It looks absolutely horrendous.”

“I think his spikes look nice. Fushiguro’s a pretty handsome guy and he’s got nice eyelashes,” Itadori says consolingly. Fushiguro blushes very lightly at this, and Suguru does his absolute best to avoid all this terrible, dramatic, student affair business. He does not want to be a part of this. Especially not when Gojo is here.

“Nobara’s right,” Gojo snickers enthusiastically as he stalks over with too-gangly legs and ruffles Fushiguro’s hair. Now his hair looks messy and frazzled—marvelous. “You’ve got an okay face, Megumi, but no one’s ever going to find you attractive with that hairdo. And that sour look you’re always sporting.”

“Your hair’s not that much better,” Kugisaki says with a deeply personal scorn laced through each and every one of her words. “What’s up with all that? Are you an albino rat or what? And your sunglasses look stupid. No offense, sensei. But if we’re gonna be a team, we might as well air out our grievances early on in the game.”

Gojo gapes at her, flipping up his sunglasses to level Kugisaki with the full enormity of his devastation. She flinches back as he blinks his blue, blue eyes. They almost seem like they’re glowing. “But we haven’t even gotten the ball rolling yet! That’s next week! Nobara, you’re so mean to everyone. Me and Megumi are *so* incredibly hurt, like, we’re offended and all.”

Megumi doesn’t look all that offended anymore. If anything, he looks like he might fall asleep right there on the couch.

“Gojo-sensei, I think your sunglasses are very cool, and having white hair is also very cool!” Gojo dances forward, giving an extraordinarily powerful high five to Itadori, who even more extraordinarily, is able to return it with full force.

“Yuuji-kun, you’re my favorite now,” Gojo crows, and just like that, Kugisaki is now Suguru’s favorite by default since Fushiguro doesn’t seem like he cares well enough either way.

“Alright everyone,” Suguru says loudly, clapping his hands thrice to get everyone’s attention. “Now that introductions are over, let’s get to actually discussing debate. We won’t take up much of your time. We’ll just cover basics, and we’ll all get out of here in ten minutes—I promise.”

“We are NOT covering cloud computing this early into the school year,” Suguru fires back viciously. “Out of all the topics we could hope to cover, do you really think cloud computing is a good start? Piss the FUCK off.”

“What the fuck man?” Gojo throws his arms up into the air, newly exasperated. “Our topics are centered around data privacy, security, accountability, and fairness in relation to medical applications of data. Blah blah, blah blah blah! Wah wah wah—cloud computing fits perfectly.”

“Cloud computing is an advanced topic. Emphasis on *advanced.* They don’t even know the damn terminology to understand the topic—how do you think we’re going to discuss the ethics of the matter? We’d leave that up to the upperclassmen to start tackling immediately while these guys can ease into the material. Do you think any of those kids know what latency-sensitive workloads are? Throughput-oriented workloads? User-facing jobs? Batch-processing jobs? Iaas? Paas? Saas?”

Gojo merely shakes his head and then smirks that terrible smirk he always likes to carry. He clicks his tongue and sharply snaps his fingers at the students. Somehow, Suguru gets the feeling that he’s already lost.

“Megumi, get at it.”

“Time-orientated. Output-orientated. Real-time interaction and quick response. High-volume, repetitive, automated. Infrastructure-as-a-Service, Platform-as-a-Service, Software-as-a-Service. Done.”

Megumi’s voice is extremely monotone and would be the type to induce sleepiness. It’ll be difficult trying to get him prepared for actual competition mode.

Itadori lets out a small "woah" anyway and starts clapping quietly. Kugisaki doesn’t say anything, tapping away at her phone.

“That guy handed me a notecard to memorize before the meeting.” Megumi shrugs, indifferent.

Suguru immediately turns to Satoru, who shrugs and strikes an unflattering but distinctive and dazzling pose. “Hey, I’m just proving that they can pick up things pretty quick. Don’t

look at me like that! Besides, that sort of stuff isn't going to be *that* helpful if we're discussing ethics."

"Okay, fine, you win this one," Suguru snaps, exhausted. "Then what do you propose we should focus on? Deployment models? Ethics behind AI and algorithms and copyright business?"

"Kinda, but not really. Suguru, you really need to get better at this." Satoru fluidly uncaps a marker and then draws a completely incomprehensible scribble of an image on the whiteboard. "See here, our debate team is not like other debate teams. We're completely on the offensive and entirely ruthless. We're gonna focus on the capitalism behind unfair and unequal access, illegal data trading, and bad energy consumption practices behind cloud data centers. We'll touch on accountability and all that for counterarguments and whatnot, but that's not our thing."

"What are you even *saying?* Are you trying to get us to lose? Not just that—this is not how we handle ethics." The room gains a deadly sort of atmosphere like even the air molecules can tell that they're in deep shit just by being in the same space as him and Gojo.

As it is, their three students quietly slink out of the room one after another.

"I mean, we're not gonna lose? After all, *I'm* the head coach for this team." This time Gojo finally narrows his eyes, though his smirk is still as firm as ever. "Don't be so naive with all that vainglorious justice crap, Suguru. Boo hoo, sustainability this; boo hoo, transparency that. Stuff like carbon credit is just a big hoax meant to make it seem like they're actually doing shit when they're really not. That's all basic-level stuff—and I don't care about the philosophical side of things. We're going to get to the corruption behind it all and create epic arguments for why companies keep practicing their slimy practices."

"Co-coach, you mean. I'm not saying we shouldn't *also* explore those topics," Suguru forces an even, neutral tone. He is a professional. He has dealt with a number of maddening coworkers and superiors. He deals with medical ethics on a daily basis. He can deal with this. "But you've got tunnel vision. You're going to fuck us up at this rate. You should—"

"I should? I should what?" Gojo says challengingly, glowering at Suguru with a frown that looks more like a pout than anything else. "You're going to tell *me* what to do? Please. I'd rather walk across a bed of nails."

"Well *someone's* got to tell you when to shut the fuck up and *listen* for once."

Satoru actually looks kind of pissed off at this and he jerks back roughly, frowning as he pushes his sunglasses back and straightens himself back, finally an appropriate distance away from Suguru.

"Yeah? Well, you too."

And then Satoru marches out of the meeting room, the door clicking almost jaggedly behind him—and once again Suguru is left to sigh and contemplate his life in Satoru's wake.

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“This can’t be real.”

“You’re not on mute.”

“I don’t care if you hear me or not.”

Gojo grumbles, his pixelated image blurring slightly as he moves to rest his cheek on his hand.

“You hurt me so dearly, Suguru.”

Because misfortunes don’t seem to stop at three, Suguru has to deal with Gojo an unfortunate fourth time. It’s truly insane how these occurrences keep piling up—first Gojo wanders into his lecture, then he declares himself Suguru’s enemy, suddenly he’s revealed as the mysterious other co-coach for the debate team, and now he’s Suguru’s work partner for finishing off this project for a data analysis software that belongs to neither of them.

“Okay, you know what? Let’s not bicker any longer. I just want to get this over and done with and go to bed early.”

‘Tch, you’re no fun.”

Six hours later, neither of them has gotten up once and Suguru feels like the most horrible trash monster to have ever existed. It doesn’t seem physically possible to get out of his chair anymore. They’ve moved beyond scrounging in every corner of Stack Overflow to obscure GitHub developer pages to just clicking on every link they find no matter how shady just so that they can find the damn code they need.

“I hate computer science,” Gojo wails as a fucking Quizlet link of all things slowly, oh-so-slowly loads on his screen while his typing grows increasingly louder.

“Aren’t you literally the head of the compsci department?”

“Not the point! I’m having a *moment* here.”

He’s not even working on their project anymore—needed a “brain break,” as he called it. He’s writing a poker-playing method as Suguru can see from Gojo’s split-screen view, which is concerningly titled “go_all_out:3.”

On the other hand, since it’s not like they can continue working on their code as they are now, Suguru is writing a very strongly worded message to some arse on Reddit who is sharing their project that “they put so much hard work into and would love for everyone else to be able to use it as well as long as they get proper crediting!” Which is fine and all except that Suguru can clearly recognize that’s his own fucking code from when he was an undergrad. Serves him for not encrypting his code, maybe. Though it says volumes about the coding community that everyone has to be so hedgy in the first place.

He's also had to send completely stupid and altogether inaccurate responses on four Stack Overflow unanswered question blogs just so that he can wake up to a bunch of arrogant, infuriated programmers pouring in with the actual answer. Hive mind is gorgeous.

"Coding for bloody HOURS on end—no food, no shower—my hair gets all icky—NO NOTHING, and everything seems to smell even the damn chair and I want to eat so fucking bad, but I'll lose my focus if I get up, and it's not like my cat can make me dinner, and there are so many *things* it's way too overwhelming why can't they just condense a few things. Python this, pandas that, R this, NumPy that—don't even get me started on Matplotlib—"

Gojo has been talking a lot while they've been at work, actually. Six hours of getting to know a person doesn't seem like a lot unless the hours are fully consecutive without any break whatsoever, and Gojo can *talk.* Suguru didn't respond at first, attentive to the code and the code only, and he didn't want to argue with Gojo again. But then he started paying attention and humming his acknowledgment every now and then, and Gojo wasn't actually saying anything that made Suguru want to strangle him, so for a while now, they've actually been having conversations. Though now they've settled into a more peaceful mood. As peaceful as it can be with Gojo's ranting, at least.

So far, he's learned that Gojo likes cats, actually has a cat, and uses his cat as his debug ducky. Gojo never really had opinions on food in the past, but he started eating a lot of desserts and other sweet snacks for a "brain boost" during coding sessions, and he's currently obsessed with zunda mochi. Gojo has been friends with Shoko since their undergraduate years and Shoko cheated her way through med school—which somehow does not bother Suguru. Gojo, endearingly enough, likes *Digimon*, dislikes alcohol, and has a fondness for collecting cute handmade keychains and Suguru has already promised him to ask his girls to make him a couple.

Gojo doesn't have that many friends (read one) because people don't tend to like him and he in turn doesn't really like people. Gojo's a teacher because he's a strong believer in the ability of the youth, of all things, and he's a fervent supporter of allowing the youth to—well—be the youth. Gojo has trouble sleeping sometimes on account of his hypersensitive eyes, and coding sessions like this are extremely hard on him because of his eyes which is why he's currently wearing a blindfold made of some probably very expensive, extremely special fabric. Gojo loves knowledge above all else, and the power it provides him but he's also very alienated because of how much more he knows than anyone else around him.

"We're using Matplotlib right now."

"DO NOT GET ME STARTED—I can't even stop typing oh my god my wrists ache so fucking bad. Can't even turn on a light even though my eyes are starting to hurt, I just can't bring myself to turn away from my code for a moment, curse the moment I ever got into this wretched—"

They both come to a dead pause, Gojo's incessant but admittedly genius coding coming to a halt as they stare at the exact bit of code they need, right on the fifth flashcard of some poor sod's Quizlet set.

“It’s beautiful,” Gojo breathes and Suguru nods fervently as he gestures for Gojo to copy over the code and paste it into their notebook. For once, Gojo follows up immediately, pasting the code and closing the Quizlet tab quicker than it had loaded, at the very least. It takes a long, clunky moment for Suguru’s view of Satoru’s computer screen to readjust itself and for his own tab to sync, but when it does, it’s marvelous.

“My back aches,” Suguru observes dreamily as he scrolls again and again through their code. “I knew the EDA would take a while but that the ggplot2 would be so difficult. Data visualization has never been this tricky in my experience.”

There’s a lot to observe in Gojo just by watching him code, actually. Gojo likes to hum silly songs while he works, but also full ten-minute classical songs. When he’s really got a laser-like focus on what he’s doing, his eyes are wide and unblinking underneath his blindfold and his tongue peeks out of his mouth—and then he wonders why his mouth feels so dry after he breaks out of it. Gojo smiles seemingly unconsciously and genuinely when Suguru says something nice to him—so Suguru actually tries to say more nice things to him and Gojo in turn becomes a much nicer person to be with.

“You know the higher-ups. They’re just fucking with us. And we’re the best at code for medical applications. Plus we’ve got a pretty high level of expertise in pretty much every medical thing ever, so they can just dump whatever on us.”

“You think that *we’re* the best coders?” Suguru drawls, amused. “Including me and not an actual other compsci person?”

“Why them?” Gojo scoffs, words slurred together just slightly. He yawns loudly, all cat-like as he stretches his arms out before rubbing hard at his eyes through his blindfold. “Suguru, listen here. I’m the smartest guy around, and I hate to say it, but you come up pretty close.”

Somehow, this is touching Suguru in a certain way. “Well, you know, I hate to say it but you come up pretty close if I had to think about who’s the smartest person I know. Good work, by the way, Gojo. You worked hard.”

“...Thanks.”

Suguru laughs, low and scratchy from the lack of water as he pops his back and scratches slowly rotates his wrists back and forth. “No prob—”

He suddenly quiets himself, peering closer at his bright laptop screen in the murky darkness of the room.

Gojo’s clearly asleep, his huddled mass somewhat grainy and hard to distinguish Suguru can see a lump of white hair and the rise and fall of his back as he breathes in slowly, in and out, in and out. There’s a relaxedness to his features that for once makes him look somewhat gentle, and Suguru suddenly has to blink hard at the realization that this really is just a guy. Someone his age also struggling with getting along with his coworkers, fielding weird demands and regulations from his superiors, figuring out what to eat for the night, setting aside some money for the month’s rent, and trying to get as much funding as he can to realize his dreams.

There's a light snoring noise and Suguru huffs a breath, watching as Gojo's eyelashes flutter slightly before settling.

"Good night then," he mutters lowly as he saves their project and prepares to end the call. But he pauses for just a moment longer—maybe to see if Gojo will wake up, maybe because of how interesting it is to see Gojo in such a relaxed state like this, maybe because he isn't quite ready to crawl in bed and end off the night.

And then everything gets decided for him when Gojo's disturbingly massive, fluffy white cat butts his face against the camera, wails loudly, and then walks right across Gojo's keyboard —scribbling a bunch of gibberish into their code and turning off Gojo's computer.

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Compilation of comments made in Geto Suguru's and Gojo Satoru's EDA and data visualization for iPop study dataset: Longitudinal multi-omics of host–microbe dynamics in prediabetes.

 # nyahhhhhh :333333333c

 # use the comments for proper annotations

 # that was my cat though don't lay that on me

 # suguruuuuuuu do u like poker i like poker

 # i don't play poker

 # you're SO boring. u gotta come over so i can teach u someday

 # ? to your office?

 # no that's boring. my office isn't boring though it's great i'm a cool teacher. u should come over to my place my cat can be friends with u and we can have dinner tgh

 # maybe someday

#JFAOIWEJALKSJDK@)J@#)F:?>

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"DEBATE TEAM LET'S GOOOOOOOOO!" Gojo does a twirl in front of the whiteboard before ending off in a dramatic, but entirely graceful pose. Suguru will have to ask him if he ever did ballet—but for now, he's off to the side making pitiful jazz hands.

"Satoru, some of us are actually busy," one of their second-years calls out loudly. Zenin Maki, though apparently she is to be addressed as Maki and Maki only.

"Boo, you're so boring. All of you! Even Yuuta got boring after the summer." But still, Gojo is grinning as he scribbles out more incoherent notes on the board. "Okay guys, first general

meeting of the year. Let's talk data."

"Data's so boring though," Hoshi says glumly from where they're perched on a loveseat. "I liked it better last year when we started off with cloning."

"Kirara-chan, you're only saying that because Hakari-kun is still on suspension right now. And tell that to Suguru when he's so in love with data," Gojo snickers, now focused on drawing his cat on the whiteboard. It's actually a pretty good reproduction, which says a lot about his handwriting skills. "He's the most real data guy here."

"I'm not going to say anything about that, or ask why we have a student on suspension I haven't been made aware of," Suguru says evenly. "We agreed to alternate who leads the meetings *and* to not make any provoking remarks or retaliate against anything said unless it was truly necessary. Just get on with the meeting."

"Wow, you really are a boring datasci guy." With four forceful strokes of his marker, Gojo's cat now has round sunglasses—matching the new ones Gojo himself is wearing today. Another second year is drawing more cats and what seems like various onigiri balls and ingredients on the bars. He's very good at super deformation. "Okay, guys. This is very important, so please listen up! Did all of you fill out the survey that was sent out last week? Around Tuesday night?"

The room goes still and everyone looks around at each other shiftily before nodding at Gojo. Suguru wants to say that he doesn't know what the bad air was inspired by, or that he doesn't get why they're reacting so badly to the matter in question, but he filled out the survey himself so he completely and fully understands why they're all so on edge.

A one hundred-question questionnaire on, well, a lot about you. Your hair color, your foot size, where you grew up, what side of the bed you sleep on, which of these topics would you enjoy yelling about the most, which of these movies do you hate the most, do you have daddy issues—all sorts of weird things.

It's not as if Suguru…*wanted* to answer the questionnaire. But it was sent out by the principal with a special red alert and a long but curt message about the need for the survey to be filled out for the continued existence of the school.

Alarming.

Sounded like bait, but Suguru found most of the questions to be innocuous enough for him not to mind, and it's not like he would have felt particularly guilty if the school shut down because he didn't fill out some dumb survey, but he really would like to keep his job.

"Fabulous, great job everyone! And now it is time for me to declare that I was the one who wrote that survey!"

Gojo strikes another pose before suddenly leaning back, leaving Suguru to lunge forward and catch him. Gojo lifts up his glasses, makes a kissy face at him, and then leans back even more dramatically in Suguru's embrace.

“And starting today—and for every day until the end of the school year—the data entered will be compiled together and used to declare a couple of the day. Yay!”

Just like that, Suguru drops him like the hottest potato to have ever been cooked just as the room erupts into loud protest.

“YOU FUCKING WHAT?” Kugisaki roars, held back by Itadori, Okkotsu, Maki, *and* Panda. Fushiguro alone stands off to the side, kicking at Gojo’s rib cage repeatedly. Inumaki disappeared…somewhere. “WHAT THE HELL, SENSEI? YOU DON’T EVEN HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO—”

“Ah, but consider that I do have the authority.” Gojo obnoxiously taps his temple in an indication of his supreme intellect as he rolls over, expertly avoiding Megumi’s ugly brown boots. There’s a respectable amount of skill to Gojo’s dodging.

“See now, there was a page of terms and conditions, yadda yadda yadda. All in the fine print that this would happen. And note: I got Higuruma from the law school to help out, so don’t think there are any loopholes whatsoever or that I can be sued. Now I suppose you all will go home and always read the terms and conditions from now on! Let this be a lesson to you in data privacy and how willingly you share your data—who knows what those fiendish corporations do with your data, eh? Remember how easily companies and researchers can pull the blinds over unsuspecting individuals when you do your research for comp material.”

“Sensei, what do you mean by a couple of the day?” Itadori queries. Kugisaki’s elbow has been repeatedly hitting him in the face, but he must have a wondrously thick face since he doesn’t so much as twitch when he gets hit and his face reflects zero damage. Not that that's stopping Fushiguro from digging out some dog-patterned bandaids from the depths of some pocket.

Ah, young love.

“Exactly what it sounds like,” Gojo says all too happily as he takes advantage of Fushiguro’s distracted state to viciously kick out his feet from underneath him and spring back to his own feet. “I made an algorithm that analyzes all the input you guys put into the survey and it determines what two students would be a great fit for each other, which is then broadcasted each day along with the relevant info. Nothing too private though! I’m not *that* invasive.”

Everyone stares at Gojo. There seems to be the unanimous thought that he indeed would be that invasive.

“Aww, guys, come on! It isn’t that bad. Trust me! The student broadcast should be in teacher emails right about…now, actually, so let’s take a peek at it.”

Three minutes later, they’re a quarter into the broadcast and there it is: “Crack Ship of the Day!”

“And now we have a new daily segment, courtesy of a mystery professor who requested to remain anonymous for the sake of their own personal safety. We will be reading out a

message they sent to us now," Miwa says pleasantly. She's very well-suited for the role of news anchor.

"This segment will reveal a…crack ship of the day?" Miwa blinks a bit. Even she is taken aback by her script, apparently. Amazing. As such, Muta smoothly takes over for her.

"Based on a recent campus-wide survey, student and teacher information will be compared to determine what two individuals seem like they should date—note that students will be matched with students only, and teachers will be matched with teachers only. Sexuality or romantic inclinations will not be taken into account as these are quote-unquote 'crack' ships. This is not meant to be taken seriously though any controversy this may create is not entirely unwelcome. Teehee—as said by Gojo-sensei."

Everyone turns to Gojo and glares at him, who shrugs in the middle of the tight huddle pile they've created around his laptop.

"Teehee."

"And without further ado," Miwa continues brightly, "the crack ship of the day is—oh wow—freshmen students Itadori Yuuji and Fushiguro Megumi! Congratulations to the two of you if this sparks an epic romance. These two students were paired because of their shared experience with beating up delinquents in middle school, their shared love for animals—Itadori-kun specifically has a fondness for Megumi's dogs, aww!—they respectively like teaching other people to cook and being taught how to cook—notably because of a shared experience with other—and though these will not be detailed, there are many others answers they provided that also name the other. But as a fun fact, they apparently share each other's clothes a lot and like doing that. How sweet!'

Everyone slowly turns toward Itadori and Fushiguro, who somehow distanced themself from the main mass of the group. Itadori is laughing nervously as he twiddles his fingers and the latter of whom is blushing furiously as he attempts to bury the entirety of his head into his collar—failing solely because of his atrocious, monstrously long spikes of hair. He still has one hand extended from where it was fixing one last bandaid onto Itadori's cheek.

"Woah," Kugisaki finally says, a deep shock thrumming in her voice. "We've literally only been here for a month and a half? Geez, you two move quickly. Sharing clothes already? No normal pair of roommates do that kind of shit after just a month and a half. *I'm* your roommate and *we're* not sharing clothes."

"Fushiguro's a nice guy!" Itadori says, words all too rushed and high-pitched. "It just so happens that he's very—"

"And now we have a special add-on to our segment! Reverse Crack Ship of the Day! Wherein there are two people put together not because they're perfect matches but because they're complete opposites in every way! Opposites attract, so they say."

Everyone turns back towards Gojo again, even more viciously than before.

"...Guys…I swear I didn't plan this one…blame Utahime…I had to send this through her…"

“Iori-sensei will be incredibly mad if this ends up putting her *and* Gojo-san together,” Okkotsu mutters anxiously. Suguru isn’t entirely aware of what issues lie between her and Gojo, but he can empathize purely on the point that this is Gojo they’re talking about.

“The reverse crack ship of the day is…teachers Gojo Satoru and Geto Suguru!”

And Geto’s heart falls into the most acidic depths of his digestive system. His cheeks might be burning, and now the possibility of Fushiguro’s reaction being more indicative of embarrassment rather than actually having a crush arises in his mind.

“Ah, I’ve actually run into them a couple of times. I actually think they’re quite similar to each other? Mechamaru, what do you think—”

“Miwa, we have to finish the segment. We can talk later.”

“Right, right! Anyways, Gojo-sensei likes sweet things while Geto-sensei likes savory things. Geto-sensei says we should treat everyone with respect while Gojo-sensei says he’d laugh if he saw a small child being kicked. I dunno, Geto-sensei can be kinda—ahem. Gojo-sensei says he’s extremely competitive while Geto-sensei says he’s not really a competitive sort of guy—eh? But that guy’s really very…I’m getting off-track again, haha. Geto-sensei prefers baggy pants and high-waisted pants while Gojo-sensei prefers slacks and low-waisted pants. Geto-sensei was an undergraduate delinquent and does *not* like to talk about it while Gojo-sensei was a high school delinquent and *does* like to talk about it. And so on, and so on. Congratulations to the two of you!”

Suguru kind of really feels like he could kill someone right now. He isn’t going to say whether he wants to kill someone or not, just that it’s fully within his current abilities to kill someone.

“Oh, woah, Suguru—it seems like we’re a match made in hell.” Gojo pulls down his sunglasses, batting his long eyelashes monetarily before winking flirtatiously at Suguru. “Shall we date? We can split the funding if we’re a couple. It’ll be a win-win situation. Though I’ll have to siphon off a bit extra for my end of things.”

Suguru wants to kill someone and right now, that someone is Gojo.

“One moment you’re kind of tolerable, the next you’re *completely* insufferable,” Suguru says in a very even, very incensed manner. “In all my life, I have never, ever met someone quite so —”

“Ah—one last thing before we move on with the daily news on campus. One feature Gojo-sensei and Geto-sensei share in common is they’re both concerningly into overthrowing the government. That’s it for today’s campus crack ships! Stay tuned tomorrow for a new segment!”

Everyone reassumes the same old deadly calm, Suguru’s clenched fist trembling by his side. Gojo is really looking all too punchable at this moment. Gojo seems to understand this, as he pouts at Suguru before stroking the perfect, smooth skin of his cheek and poking at it repeatedly.

“Okay, that was kind of funny,” Itadori finally says just as Suguru unleashes a powerful right hook right against Gojo’s cheek.

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“I can’t go anywhere on campus without people pointing and giggling at me and asking ‘Oh! Teehee, have you kissed Gojo-sensei yet?’ It’s incredibly annoying.”

“Heh, you sounded funny imitating the high-pitched voices.” Gojo hums an off-tune beat as he stirs their pot of miso, which was really the only thing Suguru could entrust him with after learning that Gojo survives solely off instant ramen, gourmet restaurant meals, and endless amounts of both cheap and expensive sweets.

“The point is that this is growing inconvenient for me.” Suguru delicately places a piece of salmon in each rice bowl before adding chopped scallions and crispy fried shallots. Gojo squeals excitedly when he sees the shallots, which makes his cat who’s been slinking around on the ground with all his great girth start yowling and try to jump up onto the counter.

“Keep your cat down. He’s already knocked over half the bookshelf. I’ve never had a dinner guest as bad as you two are.”

“He’s just being kitschy!” Gojo protectively wraps up his cat in a hug, who squirms against his grip and repeatedly thumps his extremely fluffy tail against Gojo’s arm. “He’d feel better if he was at home, but *someone* had to cancel on coming over for dinner so of course, I had no choice but to come here.”

“No one said we had to do this dinner? And I said I’m sorry, but Nanako’s sick and—” Suguru frowns as the miso starts to simmer a bit too hard. “Gojo, you have to watch the pot at *all* times. Oh my god, you had *one* responsibility—girls! Perfect timing!”

His two lovely, absolutely amazing and so wonderfully behaved young girls scuttle into the room, cast wary glances at Gojo, and then gasp when they see the cat.

“KITTY!” Nanako shrieks hoarsely before breaking out into a series of coughs as she runs over to Gojo’s feet where the cat seems to be attempting to be gouging a hole into the tile by licking at it furiously with his tongue. Not a very smart cat, this one.

Mimiko approaches him more shyly, edging up nervously to the cat before stroking his soft, fluffy fur once and then immediately hugging him. Seems like she loves him well enough.

This, if nothing else, endears the girls completely to Gojo.

“Suguru!” he croons, stooping over the girls. “You didn’t tell me your daughters were so lovely!”

“Well, do you really think I would say anything but? I’m their father.”

Gojo gapes up at him in amazement from where he’s down on the ground, squishing Nanako and Mimiko and the cat in a tight hug. All three of them are squirming viciously, but Gojo’s quite strong, so it seems. The cat resorts to thumping his tail again.

“Suguru…parenting really takes the rationality out of a person, doesn’t it?”

‘You’re just being stupid about it.”

Gojo scoffs loudly as they re-situate themselves at the table, rice bowls and slightly burnt miso bowls and vegetables and agedashi tofu arranged all nice and neat on the table.

“But I’m really not. Suguru, don’t be so mean to me. “

“You know, this was actually a pretty good night,” Gojo remarks carelessly as he blows bubbles using the dish soap-water mixture from the sink. “I didn’t actually think you could cook that well.”

“I told you I adopted two children and you still thought I fed them instant meals and bought takeout all the time?” Suguru scrubs harder at a plate. “Or do you just have a general skepticism in people’s ability to cook good food?”

“...The latter.” Gojo watches as he puts another plate into the dishwasher and hauls his cat up, ignoring the way his cat yowls when he comes into contact with Gojo’s still sudsy, soapy hands. “I dunno how you can even manage being able to cook. Like, if I knew how to cook I’d be making my favorite meals all the time. I’d have dessert three times a day—four?”

“The point of having a favorite meal is that you only enjoy it occasionally. And being a good cook doesn’t necessarily mean being good at banking. There’s this, and there’s that.” Geto turns off the faucet and wipes off his hands, turning to look at Gojo, who’s seated himself on the probably unclean ground as he buries his face into his cat’s fur. He looks softer like this, his face at peace as his cat’s finely brushed fur brushes up against his skin. It’s like back when he fell asleep that one time. The warm, dim lighting of the kitchen reflects nicely against his hair and casts syrupy reflections against his cheekbones and the thin planes of his shirt.

“Yeah, but I still wouldn’t be able to resist the urge.”

“But isn’t it nicer to finally get the time to catch the bullet train to go out to somewhere like —I dunno, Sendai maybe—and finally be able to enjoy some zunda mochi then? After weeks, months of not having had it?”

Gojo stays quiet, even as his cat starts meowing loudly. “You remembered I liked that?”

Geto blinks, suddenly feeling like there’s something almost vulnerable penetrating the air. “Of course I remembered. Why would I not?”

“Suguru,” Gojo says thinkingly, almost wondrously. “You’re kind of really weird.”

“Should that offend me?” Suguru laughs somewhat awkwardly, clearing his throat to try to cut the tension in the room even though it doesn’t feel all that uncomfortable.

“Nah, it shouldn’t. It shouldn’t at all.” Gojo stands up, dropping his cat to the ground and patting his hands off on the dish towel. “Someday you’ve got to teach me how to make zaru soba. And I’ll try to figure out how to bake so maybe I can bring over some mochi for afterwards.”

“Hey, you remembered that’s my favorite?” he asked playfully, but it makes him kind of pleased to hear that Gojo could recall something like that when he doesn’t really seem to care about anything other than asserting his own superiority.

“Of course I remembered. Why would I not?” Gojo grins at him teasingly as he copies Suguru’s words, a smile spreading across his face as the corners of his eyes crinkle.

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“Shoko-san, this really isn’t funny, you shouldn’t be laughing—oh my god—STOP laughing —”

“I’m not laughing,” Shoko says through clear and distinct laughter, like a liar. “But your situation is terribly amusing. Why didn’t you just cancel your lecture?”

“I didn’t think it’d take my five days to recover,” Suguru grumbles as he runs through campus, ignoring a multitude of students wearing gag shirts some hilarious bastard on campus created.

“HE’S RUNNING OVER TO MAKE OUT WITH GOJO-SENSEI!” one of them screeches, thumping their fists against an extremely grainy, partially blurred photo from when emotions had gotten the better of the two of them and they had publicly brawled in the main courtyard. A moment of weakness early into their acquaintanceship.

Suguru flips a finger at the student as he speeds up, not caring whether he’s reported or not.

“Ooh, so *are* you running over to make out with Satoru? Please hang up before you arrive, in that case.”

“Please forget about that loathsome broadcast,” Suguru wheezes out as he rounds a corner and promptly hurtles himself through the open doors of the lecture hall he was supposed to be in fifteen minutes ago. “Me and Gojo aren’t even friends.”

“Really now? He talks about you enough to make it seem like you are—and he’s only really got me and you in his list of friends if you even count. Utahime certainly doesn’t and Nanami’s on and off, mostly off.”

“I don’t care if he’s a lonely guy.” Suguru scans the doors, sprinting past each one as he confirms it’s not his. “What I care about right now is finding out where my new classroom is —I can’t believe they changed it today of all days.”

“How unfortunate,” Shoko says, silky smooth. “Satoru has had similar issues in the past. You’d think it was purposeful at this point, no?”

“I’m starting to wonder,” Suguru says darkly as he trudges up yet another flight of stairs. Someone hoots at him and makes a kissy face before loudly proclaiming to everyone else on the staircase that “Geto-sensei is gonna go rendezvous with Gojo-sensei.”

“Why’s everyone saying that, even? He’s literally on the opposite side of campus. Ah—my door.”

“I wonder indeed,” Shoko chuckles lowly before sighing deeply, tiredly, exasperatedly. “Don’t freak out too much.”

“Don’t what?”

Shoko has already hung up at this point, but that doesn’t matter as Suguru can see for himself that Satoru is standing at the front of the classroom right where Suguru should be, and is lecturing on the exact same topic Suguru had to teach today.

“—So in the case of machine learning algorithms that don’t allow for pre-emptive action to prevent potential, unforeseeable discriminatory effects. Sariyar also says that it’s possible that these unexpected discriminatory effects may also arise from cultural assumptions, which in turn are sometimes considered to be statistically invalid and somewhat based on ideology and can therefore be discriminating.”

Stunned, Suguru silently seats himself in the back of the classroom, watching Gojo lecture with his heart in his mouth.

Gojo’s an asshole, sure, but he apparently has some degree of academic respect as he follows Suguru’s material to a tee without adding snide remarks and the like, but he incorporates his own teaching style with his eager insistence on challenging on corroborating while engaging the audience. Suguru almost feels bad for his own students—he takes more of a lecture more, work less sort of attitude since most of his students said they hated collaborative work, but they’re actually all actually working very well with Gojo.

“And that’s all for today folks! Stay tuned for the next class’s lecture on…whatever it is Geto-sensei will announce in your modules! Send him an annoying message and get well wishes since politeness and all that, and if you email me cute cat pictures I’ll be sure to convince him to give you guys extra credit!”

“I most certainly will not be giving extra credit, regardless of whatever Gojo-sensei has to say to me.” Everyone turns to look at Suguru in surprise, even Gojo—who has a hawk-like ability to sense whenever someone enters a room.

“Suguru,” Gojo croons sickly-sweet before skipping leaning against the desk and smirking. They are never going to beat the dating allegations at this rate. “How lovely of you to join us.”

“Yes yes. Okay everyone, get out quickly so I can talk to Gojo-sensei in private. And before anyone says a single word, we are not going to start making out the moment you all leave and the next student I hear to talk about the matter will get a point docked off. Don’t tell me it’s

unfair, because I'll do it anyways and you all know that admin doesn't care enough to stop me."

Everyone filters out of the classroom obediently enough, one after another like little ducks in a line. Even the usual stragglers and question-askers leave quickly, and soon it's only Suguru and Gojo in the room.

"Why'd you do it?"

"Do what?"

"You know what I mean." Gojo sits down in the seat next to him, the both of them looking out towards the empty desk at the front. "You have enough on your own plate at the moment, so why?"

Gojo shrugs, an easy, but still secretive smile dancing across his face. "Do I need any reason to stand in for a sick friend?"

Suguru remains silent for a moment, gaze flitting back and forth between the desk and Gojo's side profile, thinking, thinking.

"You think we're friends?"

"Are we not?" He asks the question carelessly enough, but there's a bit of an edge to Gojo's tone. "After all this time! I'm hurt, Suguru."

"No, we are. We're friends," Suguru says simply, even if it takes him a while to gather the words together. "Friends at the very least."

"But don't forget! We're still enemies. Frenemies, then." Gojo laughs and then springs to his feet, footsteps thumping against the hard carpet as he goes back to the desk to gather his things.

"Frenemies," Suguru echoes in a murmur as he leans back into his seat.

Gojo isn't actually all that bad of a person, he thinks quietly as Gojo exits the room, dropping a scarf on top of Suguru's exposed neck before the doors shut softly behind him.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Itadori-kun, you're always welcome to drop by during my office hours, but I'm afraid I must admit that I don't know how I can help you," he says as kindly as possible. "I mean, avoiding telling me what actually plagues you doesn't get us anywhere."

Itadori shifts back and forth on his seat, eyes flitting back and forth in a shifty, not entirely unsuspicious sort of matter. Usually, he's rather good at maintaining eye contact, being the social sort and all that. "You know, I *really* like your bookshelves, Geto-sensei. Do you have a particular way of organizing them? The colors are very—"

Suguru stares at Itadori flatly, unblinking.

"They *are* nice," Itadori says hurriedly, almost defensively—as if Suguru's eyes alone are throwing at him a barrage of accusations.

"Itadori-kun."

"I get it! I get it. Gotta stop stalling," Itadori says, high-pitched. "Well…they say that you're an expert in pretty much everything, Geto-sensei. You and Gojo-sensei both, actually."

Everything is a rather vague term.

"However true that may be, Satoru has a much more solid comprehension in any field outside his domain. I'm much better when I stick with my fields of expertise." Suguru raises an eyebrow at Itadori, who is looking more and more flustered by the second. "Is there something in particular you need help with? Why not go to Satoru in the first place, actually? I can't imagine that you wouldn't be straightforward if it was a medical anthropology matter, but if not, then Satoru would—hold on—isn't he *already* your professor?"

"Uh, maybe? I can't remember." Itadori's most certainly avoiding meeting his eyes at this point. It's impressive how he manages to find so many new things to latch his eyes onto. Since entering, Itadori's already made comments on Suguru's tea collection, half the pictures on his walls, inquired as to which company his fountain pen is from, eaten five rice crackers, oohed and aahed at oil pastel drawings Mimiko and Nanako made, and of course, tried to ask about his bookshelves. His ability to get off topic would be endearing if it wasn't hindering him from acquiring the actual assistance he so dearly seems to need.

"I just thought that with everyone you know in the math department, you could redirect me to someone else who can help me, Geto-sensei. Megumi's good at math, but he's busy with lab work right now and he can't entirely figure out Go—my math problems. Nobara's the same, but she also gets mad when she sees my professor's handiwork. Everyone knows Todo survived my professor's math course, but he's on suspension for deforming that statue of the monk Genshin when he was trying to fight Noritoshi-senpai. And Nishimiya-senpai. And

Miwa-senpai. And Muta-senpai. *And* Zenin-senpai—the younger one, not Maki. Though he wants to fight Maki-senpai too. Haha. So I'm kinda stuck now."

There are so many things going on here. Too many things. Suguru suddenly feels extraordinarily tired and has to physically rest his eyes against his hands for a moment, blinking back phosphene after phosphene.

It seems like the fact that Itadori is extraordinarily, painfully bad at lying is the only thing that seems to be apparent at the moment. The year is almost half over; it's impossible for Itadori to still have trouble remembering his teacher's name at this point. It's a very good thing that he didn't go into law.

And even better that lying is certainly not needed for speech and debate, Suguru muses as he watches Itadori pick at his nails with a surprising fastidiousness considering that Kugisaki is always complaining about how neither he nor Fushiguro takes care of their hands. Then again, Satoru sports a similar habit developed after one two many all-nighter coding sessions irritating his hands, and he isn't particularly enthused about nail care.

"Itadori-kun, in a friendly attempt to refresh your memory, is it that Satoru is your math professor?"

"Oh! Uh, wow, you know what—he is! I can't believe I forgot," Itadori says a bit too loudly, causing the both of them to wince as Itadori sheepishly rubs at the back of his neck.

"Itadori-kun," he says firmly but gently as he starts to catch on to Itadori's plight. "Is Satoru's teaching giving you any difficulties?"

Itadori wilts completely, slumping in his seat, facing the ground darkly. "Not to badmouth Gojo-sensei to *you* of all people when you and Gojo-sensei—well, I know you want to keep it private—but he *really* isn't a good teacher. At least for math. I really don't think…that cardinality has anything to do with calc but it's *everywhere* on my worksheets."

Satoru, he's really…he's definitely not going to win any teacher approval rankings at this rate. Would that sort of thing affect his funding? No—it wouldn't, Suguru thinks off-handedly before he processes absolutely everything Itadori said.

"Wait, Itadori-kun, what do you mean about me and Satoru? Keep *what* private?"

"Ah—" Itadori suddenly appears to be focusing on the texture of his desk with a grave amount of focus. "Like, that you two are together…and all? I mean like, Gojo-sensei's a bit of a loudmouth, but Geto-sensei, you keep to yourself a lot, right? But it felt really awkward to ask you for help when your boyfriend's literally the professor whose class I'm struggling with and I *really* don't want you two to fight over Gojo-sensei's teaching. You two already fight over everything!"

"I'm sorry to hear that our…frequent arguments have caused you such distress, Itadori-kun. Me and Satoru can be more professional during meetings if that helps."

“No no no, it’s fine! We know that’s just how you guys are, and honestly, it’s more entertaining than anything. Though Megumi’s just kind of all, "Boo hoo eww, that Gojo-sensei, eww, Geto-sensei too" about it. Actually, he’s the one who said it’d just be better to ask someone else, given that everyone thinks you’re with Gojo-sensei. But I don't know what teachers can deal with Gojo-sensei’s math, and I thought that you’d be able to recommend someone. Gojo-sensei just laughs if you ask him and tries to explain things, but he’s very weird about his explanations. Lots of *Digimon* references? Though, uh, maybe talking to you at all was a bad idea since I talked about Gojo-sensei’s bad teaching anyways. Whoops?”

What.

Boyfriend? Is this from those stupid rumors from four months back? That idiotic broadcast? Suguru thinks dismally. *Even Fushiguro of all people? When he’s Satoru’s mentee?*

“Do you want to have some tea, Itadori-kun?” he asks blankly in a final, epic culmination of his thoughts.

“Uh, I think I’m good—”

“Itadori-kun, have some tea. Please.”

“That’d be very appreciated, Geto-sensei.”

Three minutes later, Suguru’s only feeling mildly more in touch with things. But there’s a picture of Satoru’s cat being hugged by a clearly ebullient Satoru hung up right above the tea kettle, and it made him feel disturbingly unsettled to have to look at it after the conversation he and Itadori just had. At least now, Itadori doesn’t look like such a nervous mess anymore.

“Itadori-kun, I am not,” he clears his throat awkwardly, “entirely sure where you caught wind of such an idea—nor do I have *any* interest whatsoever in knowing how you and Fushiguro-kun came to such a conclusion—but me and Satoru are *not* in a relationship. Really now, do you think we’d have started dating after only a few months? That’s an absolutely ludicrous timeframe for anyone to launch into dating—”

He stops, suddenly thrown off by the extremely noticeable and undeniably pink blush spreading across Itadori’s face. “Oh, *come on* now. Seriously? Isn’t Fushiguro-kun a sensible, no-nonsense sort of guy? I had him pegged as the sort to not start dating until after at least a year of friendship.”

“You’re not wrong—he’s—I *swear* Megumi and I are taking things slow!” Itadori squeaks, hands flapping about jerkily as his flush deepens. If he keeps this up, another teacup will be lying shattered on the ground. These sorts of things always seem to lead back to Satoru, in the most peculiar sort of ways. “We’re just—you know how it is—we knew we liked each other, so we just told each other when we knew, I mean—I like him, he likes me, so why wait? It’s more like being really good friends than anything else—what we have right now—we hold hands but that’s—”

Itadori suddenly gasps, hand flying to his mouth as a look of mortification comes over him. “Oh wait, if you and Gojo-sensei aren’t—then that—oh my god—so are you two waiting? I

guess you two are pretty old so things might be different…"

"We're not *that* old," Suguru murmurs, but he's unoffended as he takes a sip of his own tea, still trying to continue to calm himself down. "But no, we aren't 'waiting' to begin a relationship or anything of the sort. Satoru and I are simply friends. Good friends, but just friends."

"Just friends? But sensei, aren't you two much closer than that?" Itadori blinks confusedly at him, nervous energy suddenly gone as he hunches over his cup of tea. There's something intense and oddly analytical in his eyes as he gazes at Suguru.

"Ah—I wouldn't go so far as to say that." Suguru does spend a decent amount of time with Satoru, but most of it is necessary for shared projects, teaching matters, debate, staff meetings, consulting the other—whatever it may be. If anything, there should be rumors about him and Shoko. Or Satoru and Shoko. Then again, Shoko's much better about keeping out of the public eye.

"Eh? Really? But you two always seem to be with each other. All natural and all, like you're soulmates or something" Itadori says plainly like it's entirely obvious. "Aren't you two always talking about anything and everything with each other? You two always get so caught up in your own little bubble too—not to offend you, sensei, but sometimes debate prep meetings end up being really unproductive when you two are off-track. I guess you two not dating still makes sense…but you two feel like something more than best friends to me at least, but I dunno."

Shit, Itadori's starting to make sense.

"I talk with a lot of other people, Satoru is just someone I talk with in the manner that is most…susceptible to public interest. He's so vivacious that any conversation with him becomes extremely engaging at the cost of your attention to your actual surroundings." Suguru very firmly takes another sip of his tea. It's his favorite brand of English breakfast tea. He could have steeped it just a little bit longer.

"Just because me and Satoru arguing out on campus has made the student broadcast thrice—which I still think is inappropriate—nothing takes away from the fact that I spend decent amounts of time with others like Shoko-sensei."

"But I thought it was that you deliberately marked out time after class to hang out with Ieri-sensei, right?" Itadori jabs at the small calendar on Suguru's desk. Suguru's eyes flit down to the small doodles Satoru has drawn onto the current month's page. "Like, I always arrange to meet up with Junpei and everyone else when we hang out, but with Megumi, we just find each other whenever. Like, if I see him I'll just go to him. Isn't it the same with you and Gojo-sensei? Everyone sees you and Gojo-sensei leaving class, and then bam not even a minute later, you two are walking and talking—well, bickering I guess? And he's always sitting in the back of your class, and you're also in *his* class sometimes, and Iori-sensei never stops complaining about how the two of you always ditch the general staff meetings and run off to have dinner with each other, and—"

“Itadori-kun,” he interrupts not unkindly. “Breathe a bit, and shut up for a moment, if you could. Please. I need a moment.”

Itadori happily shuts up despite Suguru’s apparent rudeness, continuing to sip at his tea while he pointedly avoids the way Suguru viciously tries to bore holes with his eyes into a polaroid of himself, the girls, the cat, and Satoru that had sneakily made its way onto his desk.

He does have to admit that he actually spends a lot of time with Satoru. What might be considered an inordinate amount of time. On-campus and off-campus. Maybe it was that they get so caught up in their conversations that he never feels like they spend long hours together.

Maybe it was that their meetings were always so unplanned, so spontaneous that he never felt like they spent a lot of time together. Not deliberately choosing to meet with each other, as Itadori said about him and Shoko. More that Satoru seems to gravitate to him when left in the absence of company and scarily enough, Suguru does the same. Just like Itadori and Fushiguro, who apparently like being with each other so much that they skipped right through the boundaries of simple friendship to something greater.

And now they’re dating, but really, they’re still just at that point somewhere just a bit beyond best friend territory. Crazy. And really, looking at it now, there’s no way for Suguru to deny that he and Satoru are definitely around that same place too. Still frenemies, if one wanted to expand a bit, but that doesn’t help at all in regards to this complex, separate mess.

Most of Itadori’s observations come purely from their shared hours on campus. But then half the school year will have passed soon, and almost half of those nights he’s spent with Satoru eating dinner together in one of their offices while they plow through some work, the girls finishing up homework or playing around with one of Satoru’s gadgets nearby.

Or with him and Satoru making dinner together at home—more often his home. Chilling on the couch afterward with Satoru’s too-bony shoulder pushing up against his as they continue talking and forget about the show playing on the TV. Or with him and Satoru out in some obscure diner, in some rickety stand alone together, so absorbed in whatever argument they were debating at the school that Suguru had to call Shoko or Larue or Miguel or Suda or Negi—anyone who could take care of the girls while he and Satoru blabbed on and on and on throughout the night.

How unbelievable, that Satoru’s become such an inextricable part of my life, Suguru contemplates as he swishes the dregs of his tea back and forth. Itadori remains silent, apparently content to look around the office for the millionth time over as he allows Suguru time to get his shit together. His office, where traces of Satoru’s presence permeate every corner of the room, every surface.

Best friends—surely, such a term can no longer encompass the enormity of Satoru’s presence in his life now. He’s always seemed to be more than just whatever label seems to fit at whatever time—from when he was only Suguru’s acquaintance and yet Suguru’s self-proclaimed enemy and also the most fascinating person Suguru has ever met. There’s got to be a label for this current something more. A label hidden beneath a label, so it seems.

“Geto-sensei? Are you okay? Is thinking about Gojo-sensei really that painful? Don’t hurt yourself.”

“Who says I’m thinking about that idiot anymore?” Suguru lies placidly. “Let’s not talk about him for a moment. So, what was it that you needed me to do for you?”

“Uh, to refer me to someone who could help me with the kind of math Gojo-sensei is teaching us. He gets all over the place, so I can’t really say it’s just introductory calculus. If you could please do that for me, I’d appreciate it a lot, sensei.”

Suguru sighs, pushing away the cold remains of his half-drunken tea. “You really could have just asked me for help, but it seems as if you’re viewing things to be more conflicted than they are. But after all this trouble, I’ll just refer you. I’m sorry, Itadori-kun. It seems like you’ve done more for me in the time we’ve been talking than I’ve done for you—which is to say nothing.”

Itadori blinks at him confusedly, completely innocent as to the inner workings of Suguru’s mind. “But I don’t think *I’ve* done anything…?”

“It’s fine, ignore me. Go talk to Nanami Kento-sensei in the Culinary Arts department. He used to be in accounting, and was an old classmate of Satoru’s. You’ll do just fine under his tutelage.”

“Thanks then, Geto-sensei! That’ll help me tons.” Itadori springs to his feet, bright and energetic with all the energy of an untroubled youth. Suguru’s feeling pretty old at this point. “Say hi to Gojo-sensei for me too, yeah? Bye then!”

“You’ll see him in class soon though, won’t you?”

“Yeah, but you’ll see him sooner.”

There’s a small frown on Itadori’s face. Not a perturbed one, definitely not a saddened or angered one. More as if Suguru had something completely silly and thoughtless and overall not even worthy of being treated as something serious, real. As if it’s absurd to him that at the end of the day, after Suguru packs his bags and shuts off the lights, he won’t go to see Satoru before they go home for the night.

“I suppose I’ll say hi to him then,” he murmurs. And then late that evening, when he packs his bags and shuts off the lights and just before he goes home for the night, his feet unthinkingly lead him to Satoru’s office as they always seem to do—and he doesn’t even remember Itadori’s request to convey his greetings until halfway through an hour of bickering and laughing with Satoru.

-

“I just think that perhaps you need to reconsider different pedagogical approaches if a student as bright as Yuuji-kun is on a wild goose chase trying to find someone who can help him with your worksheets.”

“Nah, it’s fine. I’ll pass on that.”

“Satoru.”

“...I’ll think about it.”

“Caved in that easily?”

“I mean, of course I trust your opinion, Suguru.”

“That much though?”

“Well, you’re my best friend after all.”

“I’m your best friend?”

“Suguru, are you stupid or what?”

“...You’re the idiot here.”

-

Suguru feels more like a lead-filled rat than anything else as he stands here, in the middle of some random dorm common room, observing the chaos around him. It’s a slow-minded, relatively peaceful chaos, but it’s chaos nonetheless and he doesn’t particularly feel like standing for it any longer.

“Does anyone want to get up and help clean up for a bit? You can continue whatever you were doing when we’re done. But this is unacceptable, I won’t tolerate this kind of space anymore.”

No one responds.

“I *said* that this is *unacceptable.* Don’t make me use my teacher voice.”

“No one cares except for you, sensei,” Nobara grumbles from where she’s sitting against the couch, attention fully focused on applying a face mask to Maki as the other flips through note cards, reciting their contents.

Everyone has devolved into a disrespectful level of casual informality entirely unbefitting of a meeting, which is fine and all since this is meant to be a team hangout. It’s Christmas, for god’s sake. They’re all young undergrads; they shouldn’t want to be working this hard on a holiday. But infuriatingly, everyone is hard at work so somehow this evolved into a not-debate-meeting debate meeting tainted by atrocious postures and sitting positions. That doesn’t bode well for how they’ll all behave at their next actual meeting.

“Why did so many of you bring keyboards?” Geto winces as he sidesteps an admittedly very cute keyboard with *Pokémon*-themed keycaps. “There’s no need when you all have laptops. And someone’s going to step on one of them sooner or later and break it—*I’ll* step on one and break it.”

“Geto-sensei, shut up,” Maki says nonchalantly as Nobara smoothes over the last of the face mask over her jawline. “Most of the others are compsci guys. The only joy they can get is in having cute keyboards.”

The hangout was meant to be a nice luncheon together for a couple of hours, but this marks the fifth hour they’ve all been stuck in this room. Inumaki is lying on the definitely uncleaned carpet while he holds his computer over his head—which is definitely unsafe and entirely impractical. Itadori keeps looking at a chicken wing on the floor in between clacking loudly on his laptop—a wing that has surely been lying there for over six hours given that none of them brought chicken but no one has told him not to eat it yet. Especially not Fushiguro, who’s entirely engaged in a Socratic smackdown with Okkotsu and the third years. Great that they’re finding new ways to flesh out their argumentation skills, but maybe he should check in with his boyfriend.

“Satoru, help manage your students.”

No response comes from the couch, the object of his calls being dead to the world.

“Can someone wake Satoru up before he hits that stage of his sleep cycle where brain starts to get more active again? He’ll get crabby if he realizes the thread count on that ratty blanket is all wrong.”

Again, all of his students continue to remain unresponsive, though Maki aims a kick backwards at the front of the couch, since Satoru happens to be sleeping on the one she and Kugisaki are sitting up against.

“Whuh?” Satoru startles from his nap, smacking his lips and trying to scratch at his face as he wakes up. Kugisaki promptly slaps his hand away. “Ow—geez, is that you, Nobara-chan? I dunno what’s happening, but whatever Suguru said, just do it, guys. Unless he said something bad about me, in that case, jump him. One coach is enough.”

Frustrated, Suguru marches over to Satoru’s couch, passing at least six KFC takeout boxes along the while and nearly stepping on Panda—who’s also lying on the ground with his computer and an extremely dirty whiteboard—before leaning over Satoru and ripping off both his face mask and the cucumbers over his eyes.

“OI, YOU’RE GOING TO DAMAGE HIS SKIN, BE CAREFUL WITH THAT,” Kugisaki bellows at him as both she and Maki scrabble back, avoiding Satoru’s sudden fall to the ground as Satoru yelps loudly.

“Suguru! What’d you have to do all that for? My tender face—it *hurts.”*

“I didn’t apply any force, I just used quick movements. Get up and act like a proper teacher before I spread news of your incompetence and make sure your department gets a bad rep and therefore does *not* get any more funding. Don’t think it’s an empty threat” He crosses his arms, tapping his foot impatiently as Satoru tries and fails to get up from his situation on the carpet.

Satoru stops struggling, turning to scoff at Suguru. “Ooh, you want to steal my funding soooo bad it makes you look stupid.”

“You tell yourself that.” Suguru walks off, eyeing what he’s holding with disgust before throwing everything into the trash, ignoring the three empty boxes they already shoved in there earlier. God, these kids eat a lot. “Everyone, we need to clean up. This is a public space.”

“But Sugu-chan, we’re working,” Hoshi complains, draping themself over Hakari. Megumi eyes them weirdly before slinking off to Yuuji’s side. “It’s gonna disturb our flow if we have to stop and clean up. Everyone’s comfortable! It’s fine. Yu-chan, Megumi-chan, and Nobara-chan live here and all, and they said it’s fine.”

“*I’m* not comfortable,” Suguru says sternly. “And you guys aren’t even supposed to be working. What happened to this being a simple hangout? It’s not my fault if you all decided to study and turn this into a prep meeting, but it still isn’t an official meeting so don’t treat it like one.”

“Well…we lost our last competition…so everyone’s pretty stuck on that,” Panda says glumly, words half-muffled as he smashes his face against the carpet. Disgusting. “None of us feel like chit-chatting and talking about regular stuff we could talk about outside of club when we’ll just feel like…like…”

“Like losers?” Yuuji offers up eloquently.

“Shake,” Inumaki affirms glumly.

Suguru shakes his head as he tries to squash down three more take-out boxes into the small, small trash can. “You all prepared as much as you could and performed exceptionally well. Remember that several of us made it to finals and that Hoshi-chan and Hakari-kun won duo interp. That the team didn’t win the total point count was by fault of me and Satoru—namely that a certain *someone* said we should focus on cloud computing instead of basic bioethics and datasci info before the official December topic was announced.”

“Hey! You should have pushed harder for what you wanted if we’re punting the blame about,” Satoru grouses before yawning loudly and clambering down onto the ground, apparently content to snuggle with a stranger’s blanket on the carpet. “At the very least, everyone here has an absolutely beautiful foundation in cloud computing, and we’ll be able to destroy the others come the time that topic gets chos—what, why are you all staring at me?”

“Satoru-chan, we all love you, but we’ve all forgotten most of that cloud computing stuff.” Hakari mutters something lowly into their ear, and Hoshi nods. “Kin-chan was just reminding me of something we talked about earlier—that the meetings you taught us all that stuff would be at least seven months from then.”

“None of you remember my great teachings? Gojo Satoru-sensei’s once-in-a-lifetime lessons? I even put on *Digimon* for you guys while I taught. *Digimon!”* Satoru says

devastatingly, though the effect doesn't quite come through with how happy he looks to be on the ground, especially after Suguru shoved a pillow on his head.

"Satoru-chan, we were all more focused on the *Digimon* instead of whatever you were saying."

"What?" Satoru says blankly, head poking out of his blanket cocoon. Suguru sighs and walks over, stooping down to fix Satoru's mess of disheveled, fluffy hair. "Suguru, tell me it's not true."

He shrugs helplessly. "I already knew everything you were teaching, and you can't possibly think that I've been understanding your *Digimon* references out of now—hey!—"

And suddenly, he's on the ground too, wincing as his body protests from having slammed into the hard carpet so fast without any preparation. Satoru's hand retracts from where it had grabbed Suguru's ankle, safely retreating back into his blanket.

"Satoru, what'd you do that fo—"

Suguru stops, taken aback by the way Satoru's eyes glow as he smiles at Suguru from out of his cocoon. The bottom half of his face is hidden, snuggled away in the blanket just as much as the rest of him, but there's a mischievous sparkle in his eyes and laughter wrinkles at the corner of his eyes, and that's evidence enough for Suguru.

"Eww," someone mutters across the room before there's the noise of someone's rib cage being whapped hard.

"You really are a nuisance," he sighs as he reaches out to fix Satoru's hair again. "It's a wonder that anyone here recognizes you as a teacher and not a student."

"You don't really mind though, do you now, Suguru?" Satoru laughs quietly as Suguru glares at him before batting his eyelashes furiously.

"Okay, I'm out. I'm done with this," Fushiguro says crossly, standing up and stretching. "Everyone, we're cleaning up *now* before they start making out or something."

"We're not going to start making out," Suguru says, ignored by everyone. Of course they'd ignore him, given that at least half of them are wearing the "I WAS PRESENT FOR THE GOJO-GETO SHIPFEST ON SEPTEMBER 20 2024" shirts complete with badly-created graphics of their teacher ID pictures surrounded by cartoonish hearts and sparkles. Even Fushiguro has one.

"You heard Megumi, everyone up and at it." All the other students immediately get up after Maki finishes speaking. Fabulous. A student has more control over the room than he does.

"Are you going to continue napping here or are you going to get up and clean up your pile of candy wrappers," Suguru murmurs quietly as Satoru slowly but surely pushes his blanket out to cover Suguru as well.

“You know what? Now that you ask, I really do think that I’ll continue napping. Considerate of you to ask, Suguru,” Satoru croons as a thick corner of blanket slaps Suguru in the face.

“You shouldn’t nap on the ground like this. It’s unsanitary.”

“Bah. I’m wearing clothes and there’s the blanket. And you’re on the ground too! But now you’ve also got a blanket surrounding you—no need to thank me.” Satoru not so subtly throws another heaping onto Suguru before snuggling up against his side, ignoring the way Suguru squirms. “Woah, you're really warm.”

“I don’t want to think about whatever’s on the floor getting all over your clothes and then all over your bedroom when you inevitably get back home to code another pet project. And you’re just cold,” Suguru whispers as he raises up an arm to block Kugisaki’s pointed kicks at their backs.

“Idiots, get up so we can vacuum the place.”

“NO.” Suguru winces as Satoru’s voice thunders in his eardrums, louder than ever with their close proximity. “We’re your teachers, show some respect for us.”

“Kugisaki-san, just ignore him.” Suguru sighs tiredly and for a rare moment, when Kugisaki looks down at them, she’s sharing a look of pity for his having to put up with Satoru. “You all worked hard today. Just clean up the rest if you will, and me and Satoru will clean up what’s left when we clear out. Right, Satoru?”

“You wanna hear a Christmas joke?” Satoru slurs, completely bypassing everything Suguru said. “Programmers confuse Halloween and Christmas a lot. Because OCT 31 equals DEC 25. Get it? It’s so funny…”

“That’s terrible. Where’d you hear that from?”

Satoru doesn’t respond even after the long pause afforded to him, and when Suguru finally down at Satoru, he’s miraculously asleep, body posture completely open and relaxed as his head rests against the juncture of Suguru’s neck and shoulder.

“Woah, okay, yikes—we’re *definitely* out of here. Everyone, move quicker before Geto-sensei gets all mushy.”

“Who’s gonna get mushy?” Suguru fires back without much energy as he focuses on adjusting his position on the floor without waking up Satoru so that the both of them can be comfortable. It’d be difficult for him if Satoru woke up and complained incessantly about a crick in his neck for the rest of the week.

Usual tendency to complain aside, at least now, Satoru looks awfully peaceful when he’s asleep. It isn’t as if he doesn’t look relatively calm when he’s awake, but his mind always seems to be hyperactive and jumping all over the place, even when he’s just leaning against a wall and waiting for someone to leave a room. He brushes Satoru’s bangs aside, contemplating. Maybe right now, he’s just Satoru, sleeping against Suguru’s shoulder and dreaming whatever little dreams he entertains in the quiet corners of his mind.

“Hey, we’re leaving now, Geto-sensei.” Suguru looks up for a moment to see Fushiguro, who looks extremely pissed off and somewhat ill for no apparent reason as he stares down at the two of them. It’s as if Suguru personally offended him or something. “Me, Yuuji, and Nobara live in this dorm so…don’t worry about being kicked out, but please get out as quickly as you can, thanks. The RA will get pissy if they find you here after hours. Kugisaki will come back down to check on you two if you still haven’t left.”

“Thank you then, Fushiguro-kun.”

“Yeah yeah.”

And then there’s only the sounds of retreating chatter and doors shuttering, more sounds of footsteps retreating, and then only silence cut through with the sounds of Satoru’s soft, slow breathing.

“Satoru? Satoru. Do you think you can wake up for a bit?”

In lieu of a response, Satoru starts snoring.

“I really need to take you somewhere where you won’t be an invasive presence, but like this…” Suguru sighs, but he continues to just lay there on the ground with Satoru, and finally wraps his arms around Satoru. Now like this, he feels truly comfortable. “What am I to do with you?”

Satoru snores louder before muttering something in his sleep and burrowing himself deeper against Suguru’s chest.

“Fine, I get it. I’ll stay here with you. Merry Christmas, Satoru.”

It only takes five hours for pictures of the two of them conked out and dead asleep, sleeping all ugly and awkward with the blanket tangled everywhere, their hair messy, and doodles markered onto their faces to spread across campus. After that, Suguru has to suffer through running through campus to avoid the same old shouts of him and Satoru meeting up to make out, but he finds that he doesn’t quite get so bothered by them anymore.

-

Compilation of comments made in Geto Suguru’s and Gojo Satoru’s biomechanics and finite element analysis: Organ modeling and anatomical stress analysis using C++

// i hate using c

// c++ there’s a distinction

// okay wow i bet u annoyed everyone saying it’s java not javascript

// consider adding interface w/ SCIA engineering. ifc++ ????? tbd

// suguruu don’t ignore me , ’:3c

// shut up i need u to work on checking over the cbfem i'll focus on the medical technicalities

// ur so boring suguru…ok why did c++ not go out with c

// i'm not going to entertain you

// bc c just has no class :(

-

"I've never quite seen you so worked up."

"I'm trying my best! Amanai's been my best student, she deserves a full night of cramming for my speech introducing her work. Neural Turing machines…she built on my computational designs and all, I was very smug about it up until she asked me to be the one to introduce her speech. After that I only felt dreadful, I hate speeches," Suguru moans before continuing to speedily and loudly type away at his document.

"How befitting of the bioethics speech and debate coach. You really should have started this earlier," he says dryly before sitting down on the grubby tile floor of Satoru's kitchen. "Why didn't you in the first place?"

Satoru pauses his typing again to level him with a flat, incredulous stare. "You seriously don't recall how busy I've been with everything else? Come on now, Suguru."

"Of course I remember," Suguru harrumphs as line after line of dark text flits across Satoru's screen. "Still, you've always been good at managing your workload."

"I am good at that, amn't I?" Satoru smiles cheekily at Suguru for a moment, face alit by the harsh, cold blue light from his laptop and to a lesser extent by the softer, warmer lights of his kitchen's night light. "Sometimes it feels like we're still students, all the things we have to do. They should raise our salaries."

"If you get a proposal up and running, I'll certainly back it," Suguru mumbles sleepily as he leans his head against Satoru's shoulder, mesmerized by the constant movement of the document. Satoru's cat quietly pitter patters across the tile, nails clacking ever so softly before he finally jumps up into Suguru's lap, wheezing softly in a decidedly non-catlike manner. "Is your cat sick?"

"Eh? Him? Oh, that old thing." Satoru shrugs apathetically, fingers slack as he scans over the last few lines of his document. "He's just old, that's it. You know he's been doing that ever since you met him."

"Has he really?" Suguru frowns down at the cat. The cat appears to gape dumbly back at him for a moment before he decides his best course of action is to flap his tongue at Suguru, which does absolutely nothing for the both of them. "How old is old?"

"Uh…twenty-nine years old. Possibly thirty, we couldn't nail down his exact age. I actually met him when I was sixteen but I didn't figure out he was homeless until I was twenty-four and revisited my hometown—his fur was always so clean and white, you must understand."

“Twenty-nine?” Suguru stares down at the cat again, this time with something akin to wonder. The cat smiles smugly, seemingly understanding the change in Suguru’s gaze. “Don’t cats usually only live up to their early twenties at best?”

“Well, he’s a Gojo cat, that’s all. Any member of the Gojo household is more special than anyone else on this planet.”

“More than anyone else? How arrogant.” The corners of his mouth quirk up into an amused little smile as Gojo’s cat lets out a contented, almost conceited purr. He truly must have been fated to be a cat of the Gojo family.

“But of course,” Satoru huffs proudly. His typing slows again. “Well, I guess you and the girls are kinda okay too. Megumi too, and all of them and the rest of those people.”

“I feel so touched,” Suguru says sarcastically before erupting into laughter.

“Hey! Don’t make fun of me!” Satoru slams his laptop shut before slumping over against Suguru’s side, voice rising in pitch as he harmlessly knocks a fist against Suguru’s bicep.

“Sure, sure,” Suguru finally adds between laughs. “You think of us so highly, I can really feel it. I bet ‘all of them and the rest of those people’ can feel the same sentiments.”

“But no, really! I care for and respect them!”

“Satoru, you’re in this for the kick you get from rising up in the academic world. Be serious. With your students…the only thing you really put serious thought into is seeing how far your students will challenge the system just because they’re fed up with the way you’re teaching them. Or else poor Itadori-kun would have an A, given that you two get along so well.”

“You think you know me pretty well, don’t you now, Suguru?” Satoru’s eyes slide over to the side, shrewdly observing Suguru for a still, breathless moment.

“Well, but of course I do. Perhaps better than anyone else.”

And then a wide grin alters Satoru’s piercing gaze completely.

“Yeah, I guess you do,” he whispers quietly, eyes soft and unblinking.

Long past when Satoru finishes his work, they continue to sit there, no arguments, no loud laugher, in the infinitesimal quiescence of Satoru’s kitchen. And Suguru breathes in the quiet joy of simply existing with another person, and that he’s living the sort of life where that person happens to be Satoru.

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Suguru isn’t usually quite so happy to see people, but he feels a somewhat surprising, overwhelming amount of joy at the sight of Haibara’s face, bright and friendly as ever as the other makes his way through the bustling crowd.

It's half that he hasn't seen Haibara ever since he moved, and half that Haibara's the only person who knows that's so genuinely happy with life despite its general horribility. Not that he doesn't also have some realist attitudes, but it says a lot when even Itadori doesn't have him beat when it comes to his ability to spring back into his usual optimistic outlooks.

"Haibara! Over here."

"Geto-san!" Haibara calls out happily, finally managing to squeeze his way through the massive crowd of people flooding the auditorium. "It's been way too long! Are the girls with you?"

"It really has been too long," Suguru affirms warmly as he embraces Haibara with one arm before pulling him through the hall to find a hopefully quieter, less crowded spot. "The girls are at home with Larue and the others. This would have been too technical, too loud, and too long for them. Shoko and everyone else are here though."

"Everyone? Really?" Haibara asks interestedly as he looks around the auditorium, admiring the vast space and much too expensive decorations. Tuition money being used at its finest. "I thought a good few of you weren't in the compsci department."

"Well, there's always some intersectionality, and we all want to support Satoru, of course. He's back in the work room, actually, with all the rest. Let's go and say hi to him for a bit before we have to sit for the presentations."

"I'm so excited to meet your Gojo-san, like the two of you seem like you've been through so many interesting events this year—the only things we've had happen were when a lab got burnt down and a teacher got fired for embezzlement," Haibara says enthusiastically as they part through the attendees cluttering the spaces in between the rows of seats and the walls. Even this area being crowded is alarming for a university with enough funds to run a small empire, but the compsci department is obscenely overpopulated after all. "You two are such great friends, never thought I'd see you get along so well with someone."

"You don't call all *that* interesting? And you know, sometimes that guy Satoru really gets on my nerves. His arrogance, his complete lack of ethics if there's no personal relation to him—just the other day he was saying cancer is boring. Can you believe that? You know, he just learns the stuff for debate and he *still* resorts to cruel ruthlessness and insults so subtle the judges can't say anything? But he's effective, at the very least. And there's his way of laughing during inappropriate situations, his lack of compassion for strangers, his stupidly sharp cheekbones, his even more stupidly long eyelashes. It shouldn't even be possible to have eyes as mesmerizing as he does."

Haibara's smile is completely gone—a rare occurrence. He simply stares at Suguru, wide-eyed with an alarmingly neutral expression. "Aren't you also prone to laughing inappropriately and acting unkindly…Geto-san, I don't think that your thoughts about Gojo-san really—"

"But you know, if we were to say that he's dislikable ten percent of the time, then the other ninety percent of the time, he's just Satoru and I enjoy being with him the way he is. He *is*

my best friend, after all," Suguru says loudly over the noisy crowd as they finally manage their way to the staff-only area. "Tonight's a big night for our rivalry, actually."

"Is it?" To his credit, Haibara only looks mildly confused at the mention of their ever-so-enigmatic mutual contention. "That amusing thing between the two of you? What's the issue tonight? Another argument about bananas and psychedelics?"

"Do you have to keep bringing that up?" Suguru sighs exhaustedly as they walk through a blessedly silent hallway. "But no, nothing of the sort. They'll be announcing the compsci's funding for the next school year at the end of the symposium—which is an absurd thing to do, but it certainly promotes competitive spirit and knowing Satoru, he probably encourages that sort of thing."

"Eh? Does he now…so has your department already gotten its funding declared?"

"We've gotten it. More than we had projected, so it looks like I'm actually doing something good in my position," Suguru laughs as he finally opens the work room's door. "And that Satoru has had to watch himself with just a bit more effort than he usually does."

"You're going to be eating your words when I win tonight and *you* lose, Suguru." Suddenly, Satoru's arm is slung around his shoulders, warm and comforting through the fine wool of his suit jacket as his chin nestles itself against Suguru's shoulder. "I'll get more funding than you for sure—I've already got ideas for what my reward is going to be after you lose the comp."

"Reward?" Haibara questions unthinkingly before registering who exactly it is before them. "Gojo-san! It's great to meet you, I've heard so much about you."

"Haibara…Yano, isn't it? Great to meet you too. Suguru's mentioned you quite often when talking about his past workplace." Satoru waves a hand carelessly. "Me and Suguru here agreed that the loser has to do whatever the winner wants. I mean, we could have gotten a *lot* more vicious with the terms and conditions but we figured that getting less funding was enough to even things out."

"Is that so? You two really are like little children." Haibara's earnestly polite smile is at complete odds with his words, though Haibara was always the kind to never mince words but still be taken in stride with that ever-present, heartfelt honesty on his face.

"Children," Satoru sneers, drawing Suguru in closer. "Children are stupid brats who definitely can't create neural networks analogous to Turing machines. Actually—hmm—Von Neumann architecture—okay, let's not get there now."

Suguru huffs a laugh, amused as ever by Satoru's constant tendency to be drawn in by whatever new insight is floating around in his head, just as Haibara laughs appreciatively.

"If Suguru loses, I'm gonna make him run around campus with one of those gag shirts of us the kids seem to love so much, and he's going to have to yell that 'THROUGHOUT HEAVEN AND EARTH, GOJO-SAMA ALONE IS THE HONORED ONE' or something equally cringy, and he's going to have to recruit at least fifty people for the newly established Gojo Satoru cult of science."

“The lengths your mind will go to to think of new ways to embarrass Suguru is embarrassing,” Shoko says as she approaches their small huddle. “But as long as you two don’t start up a new Scientology, then I guess it’s fine. After all, it doesn’t really affect the rest of us and it’s terribly amusing.”

“Looking nice tonight, Shoko,” Suguru says teasingly while Satoru makes ugly faces at her; Shoko simply raises an unimpressed eyebrow at the two of them. “Finally out of the lab coat for once. Satoru, look—she did her makeup.”

“I’m out of the lab coat most of the time. You two would never know since I’m not dating either of you so there’s no point in dressing up when we meet up,” Shoko says dryly before nodding a greeting at Haibara. “Not that you two would have really noticed if something about my appearance changed one way or another. By the way, I always have makeup on. I rather enjoy seeing how inattentive you two are when things don’t concern either one of you.”

“Are you dating someone? Did you know Shoko was dating someone? Why didn’t you ever tell me?” Satoru demands loudly, inducing everyone else in the room to cast wary glances over at them. “Suguru…I thought we were in this together.”

“What are you talking about?” Suguru scoffs back, just as loudly. “What do you mean ‘did I know?’ If anything, did *you* know? You two have been friends much longer than I have, you’d surely know if she had a crush on some—”

“I literally just said that I didn’t know she was dating someone. How would I know?”

“I just said that you know her more than—”

“I’m just going to go now,” Haibara mutters, a smile still fixed on his place as he watches Suguru and Satoru bicker inanely with each other. “I hear Nanami-san’s got some really interesting work going on this year. Maybe I’ll see if I can collaborate with him.”

“Have a nice talk then. It was good meeting you, Haibara-san,” Shoko grunts lowly before turning back to him and Satoru. “If you two idiots want to continue disrupting the room, then we’ll all be off to start finding our seats.”

“People shouldn’t just *stop* using makeup because of the psychological relations,” Suguru booms at Satoru. “We simply can’t generalize everything like that, are you insane?”

“I’m telling you, it’s fucking with our facial recognition programs! There’s already an insane amount of gender and age bias, and matters are certainly not being helped when we have these people who come in to contribute to our data sets with makeup purely for adversarial attacks. Or like we had an issue with these grannies coming in with makeup covering up wrinkles and stuff, and when we tell the system that they’re actually old, its recognition processes get fucked up even more, and then we get accused of exacerbating beauty standards again and—”

“Yes, but data diversity is more important, so you can’t just remove participants with makeup entirely, what are you, fifteen? Be sensible and—”

“Wow, okay, bye then,” Shoko mutters one final time before grinding a cigarette with her heel and leaving the room. “People are really going to think that you two snuck off to giggle around like lovesick teens at this rate.”

“And without further ado, Amanai Riko and her work with using dynamic neural Turing machines to artificially stimulate the merging of human consciousnesses! Thank you for coming tonight, everyone!” Satoru cheers into his microphone before bowing and posing exactly six times and then, and only then, does he exit the stage.

“Good job up there,” he whispers as Satoru settles into the seat next to him. “Very nice work —it didn’t seem like the kind of things you’d say at all.”

“I know, right?” Satoru whispers back proudly, smugly as Amanai starts off her presentation. “I actually sounded like a nice guy, yeah? Now let’s actually be nice people and watch Amanai’s presentation. I respect her that much.”

Maybe it’s the final dredges of their competitive spirit getting to them, but for the rest of the symposium, they roughly shove at each other back and forth every now and then, trying to get their head to rest on the other’s shoulder as long as they can. Satoru eventually stops, throwing out some cheap justification along the lines of Suguru’s upcoming loss means he should have at least one win tonight, but Suguru doesn’t bother to call him out on the fragility of his logic.

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“Those were some truly marvelous presentations. It’s amazing what research is being done now by our undergraduates.”

“Haibara, it really wasn’t too long ago that *we* were undergraduates.” Suguru bats away Satoru’s attempts to steal his drink as Haibara grins at the two of them. “Literally stop it. *Stop* it. You don’t even like alcohol.”

“But you don’t either!” Satoru pouts and then immediately brightens as Shoko shoves a honeydew soda into his grasp. “If you aren’t drinking alcohol, then gimme a sip.”

“It’s alcoholic, sorry.”

“But you *never* drink alco—”

“And now, we will be announcing the funding for Jujutsu University’s computer science department,” Principal Kenjaku announces, her sonorous voice carrying across the wide expanse of the auditorium and immediately silencing their conversations. “Firstly, I would like to commemorate the hard work our faculty and students have undergone throughout the school year, especially our graduating students’ most wonderful research projects. Well done, everyone.”

“We’re all aware of how hard we worked,” Satoru mutters snarkily, but there’s an anticipatory, eager edge to his eyes. “She should hurry up already.”

“—and so without further delay, we will be announcing the details of the department’s upcoming budget for the 2025-2026 school year.”

“She’s definitely going to say over seven million,” Satoru says, energy almost visibly pumping through his veins as he vibrates in place. “Suguru, you better start preparing yourself for how embarrassing life is going to be for you soon.”

“You’re awfully confident.”

“—our CS department has managed to amass over nine million in external funding for its upcoming research. We look forward to seeing what new innovations and technologies the department will develop under the continued leadership of Professor Gojo Satoru. Congratulations.”

“Of course I’m confident! After all, I’m Gojo Satoru and you saw all the presentations. My students are brilliant,” Satoru laughs brashly for a moment before suddenly pausing.

“But I also—”

“If you two would care to shut up for a moment, Kenjaku-san made the announcement already,” Nanami says succinctly before immediately turning away. “I will be going to get more food now. Goodbye, I won’t be returning here for the rest of the night.”

“Wuh? Did she say—” Satoru blinks dumbly at Suguru, and Suguru blinks dumbly back before they simultaneously turn towards the projector screen. “Suguru! The funding, it says —”

“Oh my god, Satoru, you got it—you won!” Suguru grabs at Satoru’s shoulders staring right into Satoru’s eager, vibrant eyes. Shock is still dominating his reactions, but there’s an undercurrent of a giddy smile starting to appear, and Suguru can feel an equally giddy smile start to appear on his own face.

“I WON! SUGURU, I FUCKING WON OUR COMPETITION!” Satoru yells excitedly.

In that single moment, the both of them are so excited that of course, it’s only natural that they reach out to hug each other. What doesn’t seem so natural is that they both reach for the other’s necks and end up exchanging an extremely brief, but firm kiss—but this too feels entirely natural, so the action doesn’t register with either of them until a good minute of dumbfounded hugging.

“So, are you two dating for real now then?” Shoko asks monotonously as Haibara smiles and then politely excuses himself from the impending disaster. “Though maybe next time, try not to make another public spectacle. Your track record is embarrassing.”

“What?” is the only thing Suguru manages to croak, still completely flabbergasted as he suddenly becomes hyper aware of the way his arms are nestled around Satoru and the

comforting pressure of Satoru's arms around his own shoulders.

Even more impressively, Satoru only manages a short "uh" before he shoves Suguru away, laughs an extremely nervous, extremely agitated goodbye at them, and sprints full-force out of the auditorium, only managing to knock over three trays the entire way.

Suguru stands there at the epicenter of the disaster with Shoko, arms still outstretched and his eyes wide as he blinks away the afterimage of Satoru bursting through the doors. Did any of that really happen?

"Shoko, what the hell just happened?"

"Hell if I know." Shoko sighs, exhausted by the burden of having idiot friends. "Go ask the journalism department."

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"It's not *my* fault if Satoru ran away that night and refuses to talk to me. He keeps managing to scuttle away whenever I try to find him—and I know *all* of his favorite haunts."

"Stomping ground this, stomping ground that—Satoru knows *you* know where he likes to go. That's exactly why he's going to places you won't expect him to be at. Do you know how many times the French department has tried to ban him in the past couple of months? Really, Suguru, you're a person of logic—this much you should be able to figure out that he'd go to absurd lengths to avoid confrontation.," Shoko sounds increasingly fed up with him. Nanami himself blatantly tsks from his end of the call.

"But if he's really that uncomfortable, I don't want to barge into some place he's already sulking away at and initiate what will probably be an even more uncomfortable conversation. It's a perfect setup for failure," Suguru mutes his phone for a moment and checks his watch. It's time. "Okay everyone, recess is half-over. Make sure you go over things with Satoru before it's time for rebuttals. Good luck everyone, things are already going very well for us."

"But Geto-sensei, Gojo-sensei isn't going to—"

"He's still your other coach. Go bother him."

A chorus of jittery, overstrung murmurs answer him, but then everyone's scooting themselves to the other end of the table where Satoru very pointedly continues to talk to an unappreciative Iori.

He unmutes his phone. "I mean, we literally had to bring Iori-san as a middleman. This is ridiculous. We're in the national competition and we need to have an intermediary because Satoru won't fucking communicate."

"Has Gojo-san ever communicated that well with his colleagues?" Nanami deadpans. Suguru merely hums his affirmation, eyes still trained on Satoru blah blah blahing to Iori even as Kugisaki jabs a pen into his arm repeatedly.

“Gojo-san’s a pretty smart guy, but he’s actually pretty horrible!” Haibara says brightly. No one refutes him.

“That’s certainly true,” Suguru sighs deeply as Iori starts yelling at Satoru to take charge of their team. “Satoru is often impudent, insufferable, and immature, but unfortunately I love him for it.”

“You have *horrible* taste in men,” Nanami mutters insightfully as Shoko snorts her agreement. Haibara merely laughs at both Nanami’s comment and Suguru’s apparent idiocy.

“Shut up, I’m having a crisis here,” he snaps into his phone. “I didn’t agree to a four-person call just to get bullied like this—that’s more of the kind of thing that’d happen to Satoru.”

“And yet, at this very moment, you have thought processes that make you deserving of similar treatment, eerily enough,” Shoko notes. “I can’t believe the both of you are in love with losers. Losers to equally great degrees at that. Though actually, I’m quite impressed that you admitted so easily that you were in love just now. Good job, Suguru. I knew you were at least vaguely more emotionally competent than Satoru.”

“Hey, watch it. Satoru is kind enough when I’m with him to make up for his usual trashy treatment, and I happen to love him for his flaws *and* everything else. Somewhat unfortunately.” He huffs dryly as the students start exiting the meeting room.

“That’s good to hear and all, Geto-san, but entirely unhelpful,” Nanami says shortly. “To be direct, stop complaining and actually discuss things with Gojo-san while the both of you are still there together. Bye.”

“Woah, he really left the call just like that,” Haibara remarks, but he doesn’t sound surprised.

“And I think it’s great,” Shoko says before leaving the call himself.

“Well, *they* were unhelpful,” Suguru leans back against the wall, continuing to watch Satoru keep up a one-sided conversation while Iori desperately tries to catch his eye. “Haibara, I guess since you’re the only one left, I need to ask if—ah, he hung up too.”

Can’t stall any further, so it seems.

“Satoru,” he calls out, waving an arm to get Satoru’s attention. “If we could talk for a few minutes before the competition’s over, then—”

“BATHROOM!” Satoru trills loudly before zooming past Suguru with a truly incredible amount of speed. He firmly pats Suguru’s shoulder once as he passes—and then he’s gone.

Suguru slumps back against the wall, eyes shuttering as he feels the pressing weight of yet another failed attempt to communicate with Satoru. Iori sighs as she gets up and walks over to him, casting a judgmental eye over his sorry state, but ultimately refraining from saying anything.

“You both are idiots. Go talk with him. Resolving whatever thing you have between the two of you is the least you could do after dragging me here because you were both too cowardly

to have a one-on-one conversation."

"Thanks for putting up with us, Iori-san." Suguru rubs tiredly at his eyes before straightening his tie out. "Iori-san, you've known Satoru for quite a while now, haven't you?"

"Longer than I'd like," Iori says, disgruntled. "If I had it my way, I'd never have met Gojo… such a pest and so stressful, much too aggravating to have as much power as he does. Why do you ask?"

"Iori-san, I ask this as seriously as possible: Have you ever seen Satoru in love with someone?"

Iori remains silent, staring at him solemnly through a half-lidded gaze that is increasingly showing signs of disdain.

"Well, you're that someone right now, aren't you?"

"..."

"Don't get any stupider than you already are with these matters, Geto-san." Iori checks a mirror, straightening out her hair ribbon before opening the door.

"But it's too complicated to be treated so simplistically."

Iori stares at him, hand perched on the doorknob before she scoffs and exits the room.

"You men always overthink things."

"Are things *still* not okay between you and Gojo-sensei?" Kugisaki asks incredulously as they sit in a huddle, debriefing over and waiting for the competition results. "It's been two months since the symposium."

"Let's not talk about that!" Satoru says brightly. Suguru merely winces. "I read an absolutely fascinating article on mediating product selection with a system of competing accumulator neurons. Let's have a pop quiz!"

"Satoru, don't be so unfair to your students. Let them read the article first and then we can test their reading comprehension."

He supposed that the best way to go about this in the presence of company was to act casual, the same way he usually does with Satoru, but evidently not. Satoru merely blushes a violent shade of red that erupts in splotches and makes him look like he has a bad case of a rash, and then he squeaks and falls over to the side when he tries to scrabble to his feet and hits Fushiguro's head with his elbow.

"Alright, that's it. Everyone out," Iori orders, ushering everyone to get up and retreat to some meeting room even as Megumi violently tries to roll up his sleeves and get back towards

Satoru. “We’ll sit somewhere else to wait for results, but you two—get your shit together. *Now.”*

And then silence, and Satoru all awkward and brooding as he stares at the ground, glasses masking his eyes.

“So. Satoru. Good weather we have for the comp.”

What the fuck am I doing? he thinks miserably as Satoru gapes at him. *Can’t even bring myself to start talking about what matters, and now Satoru’s going to think that I don’t have any regard for—*

“Yeah. It’s very nice. Nice cloud coverage.” Satoru weakly points outside the window. “It’s very aesthetic.”

He’s playing along, Suguru thinks quickly. *I’ve got the chance to actually talk about our relationship.*

“You know what’s aesthetic? You’re very aesthetic.”

Something is working against him today.

“Haha, hahaha,” Satoru laughs awkwardly, almost giggling as he continues to avoid eye contact with Suguru. That rash-like blush is back. “Careful, I might think that you’re calling me pretty.”

“But I am,” Suguru blurts out, tentatively taking a couple of steps closer towards Satoru. Satoru doesn’t flinch away, and Suguru slowly starts to relax a bit. “I’ll cut to the chase and say that beyond finding you pretty—which you’ve always been, by the way—I’ve always enjoyed your company.”

“Ah—well—I do too. Enjoy your company, that is. Not to make it sound like I don’t find you pretty too. Because I do.” Satoru very pointedly stares directly down at the ground, his top of his fluffy mop of hair facing Suguru as his glasses start to dangle precariously.

“Anything beyond simple enjoyment?” Suguru says softly, only the slightest hint of teasing interlacing his words. Satoru doesn’t respond, the only thing coming from him being the sound of his heel softly scraping against the rough gnarls of the carpet.

He inches towards Satoru, ducking down so that his face is directly under Satoru’s and gently removing his glasses. “Hey, look at me?”

Satoru merely blinks quietly, but he finally trains his eyes on Suguru’s. His eyes themselves are quiet, soft even with how they reflect an unknown, but definitely cautious something.

“Is it okay if we talk about the symposium?”

“No,” Satoru says tersely before wincing—and then he sighs deeply, breaths fluttering Suguru’s bangs away from his face. “I guess we should talk about it sooner rather than later.”

“Perfect,” Suguru says absent-mindedly before grabbing Satoru’s hand and dragging them both back down to sit on the floor. “Before you say anything remotely stupid, I’ll say that I liked it—the kiss.”

“...Buh?” Satoru responds sublimely.

“Don’t act as if you didn’t hear me,” Suguru says, fully teasing now. He smiles over at Satoru. “Neither of us seem to be particularly good with sentimental affairs, but if I had to speak more on the matter, I’d say that I’ve never been the greatest fan of kissing being a turning point, but it’s undeniably a clear indication of a shift in things, no? Well, I’ve kissed people before, and I’ve been loved before and loved others before, but it never felt like it does with you—and I guess that’s why I never recognized things for what they were. But kissing you, it was like recognizing that I have been waiting for you forever. And now I’m just waiting for you to come home, at long last.”

“Not particularly good my ass,” Satoru mumbles, stunned. But there’s a certain relaxation to the slope of his shoulders, and a shy smile peeking around the hands he has clasped over his face. “So what, you want me to come home with you? How do you propose I do that? Literally? Metaphorically?”

“I think I’ll leave that up to you.” Suguru laughs shortly before sighing and wrapping an arm around Satoru, pulling him in and letting Satoru’s head rest against his shoulder. “I still owe you a reward for that stupid, stupid competition. You should do something nice and ask me to take you on a date or something.”

Satoru snorts loudly, laughter echoing in Suguru’s own chest. “What’s that gotta do with coming home? You’re so stupid. But fine. I want you to take me to Marion Crepes and a cat cafe. And you have to buy me a box of chocolates and win me something at an arcade.”

“You’re quite demanding for a first date, but fine.” Suguru knows Satoru’s only joking, but hearing the contended hums Satoru makes, he really does want to do everything for Satoru when they go out. “Anything else, Your Majesty?”

“Hmm.” Suguru pokes at his suit collar. “Then you can take me home and we’ll have dinner with the girls. But we have to stop by my place and grab the cat.”

“Always that damn cat.” Suguru sighs and then plants an affectionate kiss on top of Satoru’s head. “But it’s a date.”

“Geto-sensei! Gojo-sensei!” The door bursts open, Itadori pausing only slightly as he catches sight of them before continuing on. “You guys have to hurry, we won the comp! They’re giving out the trophies and awards now, you’ve got to come for the pictures.”

“Coming, coming, run back quickly, Itadori-kun. We’ll be out in just a moment.” And then the door closes again, him and Satoru continuing to sit against each other as hurried footsteps retreat into nothingness.

“Seems like we’ve got to get back to being professionals.”

“You’re so lazy about your work ethics, Satoru.”

“Bah, you love that I’m lazy. It makes you look good.” Satoru sticks his tongue out at him before laughing as he throws open the door.

“You’re delusional.” He kisses Satoru one last time on his cheek only to have to duck down and avoid Satoru’s clingy attempts to kiss Suguru back on his cheek. “Stop it, you can kiss me plenty on our date.”

“You better keep your promise.”

They run off, hand in hand back to their students, but their heads are filled only with thoughts of each other.

-

Compilation of comments made in Geto Suguru’s and Gojo Satoru’s silly willy minesweeper solver

/ this is the stupidest project i’ve ever had to work on wtf satoru */*

*% ????? ur a /**/ user??????? i can’t live with this. prolog was meant for greater things than java-esque comments*

/ i am willingly working with u to make this stupid thing for our anniversary. don’t test me i will withdraw from the project */*

% U LOVE ME TOO MUCH TO WITHDRAW SUGURU PLS DONT DO IT I NEED A MINESWEEPER SOLVER PLS PLS PLS

/ ok fine i’ll stay. only bc i love you though */*

Chapter End Notes

- i'd like to reiterate that in this au stsg are ridiculously academic they've got mastery in every coding language they've got tendrils out in every field somewhat still related to compsci/bio. personally id never
- funding numbers are made up
- modeling + fea program's technical details are supplemented by this. thank god for github mwah
- idk ab the minesweeper i just looked up coding languages saw prolog and saw that propositional logic was in my notes. so. idk it spiraled
- toji was meant to appear but i forgot about him. he would have been very funny (trust)
- it appears to be that hakari never got a single line of dialogue. even inumaki got a 'shake' so sorry ab that

//very late edit but the scene where stsg kiss at the ceremony is inspired by this! shoutout to the reader who linked the tiktok of this very soon after this was published

End Notes

credit is very sexy and i copied a couple of sentence halves word for word so here are the articles i peeked at when writing this. also im not well-informed on datasci/coding/any of the academia stuff in this fix at all so apologies for inaccuracies

Science Forum: Adding a One Health approach to a research framework for minority health and health disparities
The ethical and legal landscape of brain data governance

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